

A REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE CENTRAL SECTION OF THE
LOWER EAST SIDE OF MANHATTAN

by

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September 10, 1948

Professor Frederick Adams
Department of City and Regional Planning
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Dear Professor Adams:

I herewith respectfully submit this thesis entitled "A Redevelopment Plan for the Central Section of the Lower East Side of Manhattan", in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in City Planning.

Respectfully,

Isadore Candeb

PREFACE

The subject of this thesis was the result of a suggestion made by Mr. Charles Cook, Director of the University Settlement House of New York City. He has long been interested in redeveloping the area about the settlement and had already fostered a survey of the census and health tract statistics for the area, which he made available to me. It is my sincerest hope that the following study may prove of value to him.

I wish to express my appreciation to the staff of the City and Regional Planning Department for the background of information and training that made it possible for me to engage in this study.

The East Side Chamber of Commerce earned my gratitude by presenting me with copies of the last twenty-four issues of their highly valuable monthly publication, The East Side Chamber News. Their secretary and economic consultant, Mr. Joseph Platzker, who has studied the Lower East Side for the last twenty years, provided me with both guidance and insight into the problems of the area.

My fellow student, Israel Stollman, who has an intimate knowledge of the area, has been a constant guide and source of reference.

Preface -2-

To Mr. Beeman of the James Felt Company I owe the privilege of using maps prepared by that company and of gaining access to a confidential study made by them.

To the many officials, businessmen, and other persons from whom I secured help and information, I owe my thanks for numerous courtesies and seemingly unlimited patience.

I alone am responsible for whatever faults and inadequacies are present in the following study.

I. Candeb

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UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT SURVEY



PART I

Introduction

The Lower East Side has been conservatively described as "America's most considerable and most incor-¹rigible slum." For over a hundred years it served as a temporary and sometimes permanent home for wave after wave of immigrants that came to this country. During these years New York was expanding outward and upward. The commerce on the East River waterfront moved to the piers of Brooklyn and New Jersey. The garment center shifted its way uptown. The retail centers went even further north, while the wholesale centers followed the trend. Meanwhile, entirely new areas in the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn were being built as great centers of population. When immigration was halted there were no new tenants to take up the gap of the continuous migration outward to these new areas, and the Lower East Side abruptly came to the end of an era. Deterioration set in rapidly. As the vacancy rates rose and buildings became unprofitable to operate, they were in many cases either boarded-up or torn down. Tax delinquencies were common and foreclosures came down upon hundreds. The area became such a bad mortgage risk that virtually no new investments

1. The Regional Plan, "The Lower East Side of Manhattan," Information Bulletin No. 2, April 30, 1931, p. 1.



Source: Bartholomew, H., Major Traffic Thoroughfares, 1932, p. 25.

Armstrong, R.H. and Hoyt, H., Decentralization in New York, 1941, p. 40.

were made and improvements were impossible.

Today, even after considerable parts of the Lower East Side have been or are in the process of being cleared and replaced by public housing, there still remain large derelict areas whose revival is possible only by complete clearing and redevelopment. But this diagnosis cannot be uniformly applied. In the central part of this apparently blighted district, there are land values that have risen in the last twenty years, a business sector that has been expanding, and wide streets and fine parks that other parts of the city might well envy. This is the area that we have chosen to study and for which recommendations will be made to guide its future development.

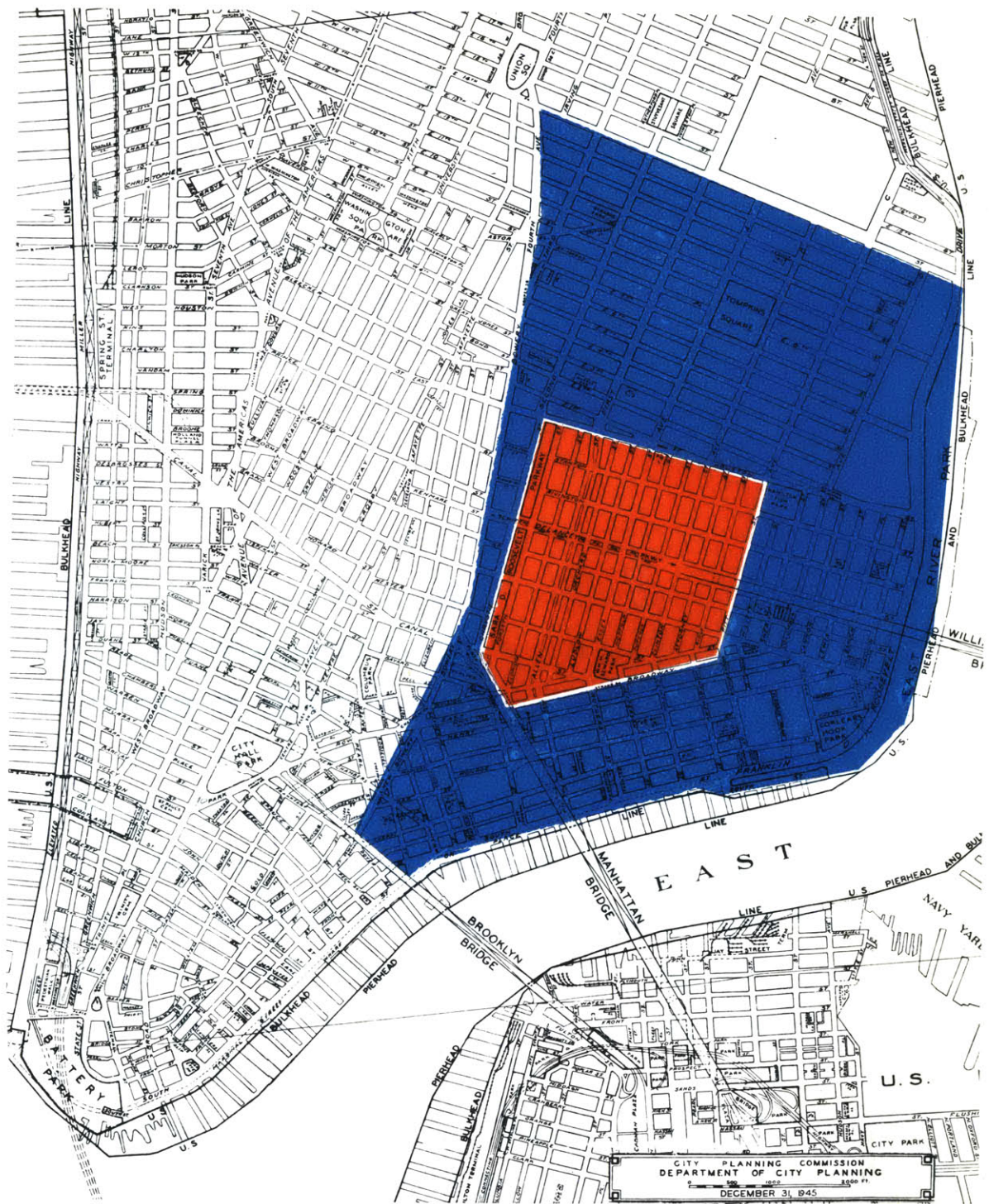
This study is made up of six parts: an introduction, a study of population and housing, an analysis of the primary business activities, a survey of neighborhood conditions, an analysis of property ownership and values, and suggested policies and program. No attempt will be made to give an exhaustive picture of every aspect of community life. Our chief interest lies in the trends and most significant developments within this area and in those forces and uses that affect its future.

Boundaries of the study area

The area is bounded by East Houston on the north, East Broadway to the south, Chrystie in the west, and Pitt Street to the east.¹ These boundaries were chosen in the attempt to secure as cohesive a unit as possible. Chrystie Street was made the western end to separate the area from the blocks bordering the Bowery, which have a commercial character and special problems unrelated to those in the study area. Houston Street was the logical northern border since the street pattern changes at this point and the character of the commercial development differs greatly. Division Street to the south marks the end of the north-south street pattern of the study area, but its development was closely tied to the streets emptying into it while East Broadway has a clearly different character. Clinton Street is the last important commercial street in the area and for most purposes will be treated as the eastern limit to the study area. However, Clinton Street is situated at the very entrance to the Williamsburg Bridge and any re-planning of this area must include the blocks to the east of it up to Pitt.

The chief inconvenience in the selection of these boundary lines is the impossibility of having census tracts that conform to them. Since the census is a primary source

1. See Map I: Location of Survey Area.



LOWER MANHATTAN

LEGEND:

LOWER EAST SIDE	
SURVEY AREA	

Map 1

of data it will be utilized despite this difficulty.
 Five tracts have been studied.² These have sufficiently uniform characteristics within them to enable us to utilize their information despite some boundary differences between them and the study area. Although many of the census figures for 1940 widely differ from today's, we are primarily interested in the trends that they indicate, not on their present accuracy.

Introduction to the Area

Forty years ago this central portion of the Lower East Side was one of the most crowded spots in the world. The blocks were covered with buildings from 75 per cent to as high as 93 per cent³ of their area. Stores lined both sides of the streets while the streets themselves were most frequently used as pushcart markets. Many of the streets were only passable to vehicles by following in the path cleared by a clanging trolley. But the ever-growing demands of New York traffic forced many changes in the area. An early improvement to meet traffic needs had been the Delancey Street widening to the Williamsburg Bridge. During the late twenties, the widening of Chrystie Street and Forsyth Street were undertaken to facilitate traffic flow to the Manhattan Bridge. Seven

2. See Map II: Census Tracts.

3. Riis, Jacob A., "The Battle with the Slums", New York, 1902, p. 105.

blocks of tenements were torn down in the process and plans were made to build model tenements on the 125-foot wide strip of land that lay barren. No builder was foolhardy enough to undertake this task with any hope of financial success so after lying vacant and wasted for several years, the land was made into a playground, almost by default. Under the administration of Mayor LaGuardia some of the blocks were combined, shutting off through access to Stanton, Rivington, and Hester Streets, despite the anguished protests of property owners on those streets.

Allen Street, the extension of First Avenue, was the next street to be improved. It was widened by shearing off half the block between it and Orchard Street. Its "El" structure was torn down during the early 'thirties and it was made into a parkway for its entire length. Meanwhile, the city was building its new 8th Avenue-Houston Street subway system. Rather than spend money in shoring up the buildings under the subway right-of-way and then bearing the additional costs of future damage suits, it was considered cheaper to buy up and tear down the structures abutting the right of way in this part of the city. As a result, East Houston Street was widened up to Essex Street where the subway turns south, and a park and playground now occupy the former sites of tenements. In the process of subway construction on Essex Street, it

was widened for its entire length. The relatively narrow strip of land that remained on the eastern side of the street offered the city the opportunity of escaping from the dilemma it had been in for years - to build a pushcart market without spending a large amount of money for a suitable site. Construction was begun on a public market that now extends from Broome Street to Stanton, which was opened in 1939. Today the area is free of the curse of pushcart markets on its streets although there are still some scattered about.

The city seemed to awake from its long period of indifference to the Lower East Side during the late 'twenties. In 1930 a new high school occupying the whole block bounded by Essex, Grand, Ludlow and Broome Streets, was built at a cost of almost 4 million dollars. Not only was its roof area developed as a playground, but it also had its own nearby playfield of 36,660 square feet at Essex and Hester Streets. Old Seward Park was modernized with recreation rooms, excellent equipment and lay-out, and another playground was built at Essex and Houston Streets, on the site of an old school that was no longer needed.

Changes were taking place in other parts of the Lower East Side. Knickerbocker Village was erected in the "lung block" area close by the Manhattan Bridge. The Amalgamated

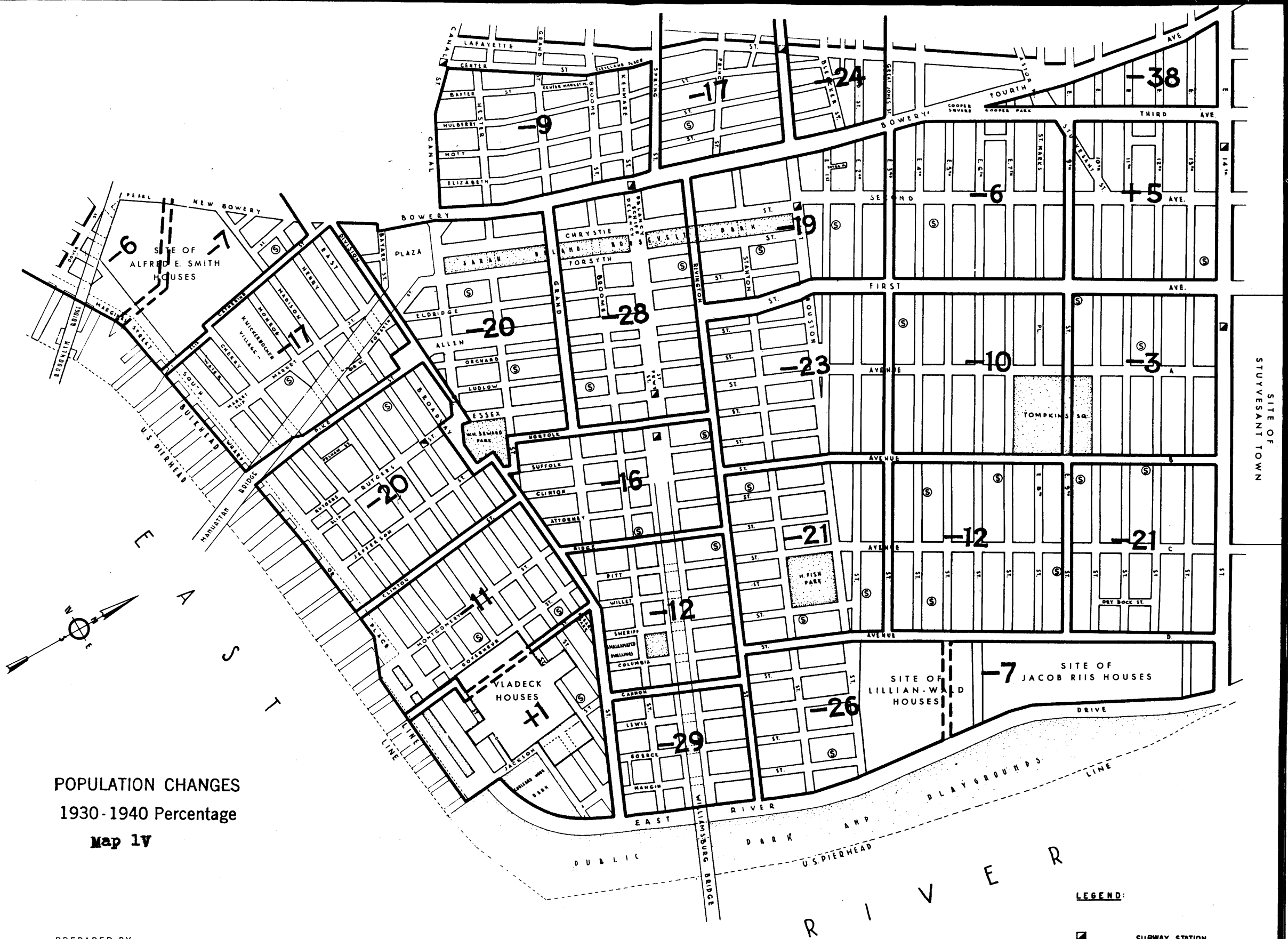


Essex Street looking south from Broome St.



Essex Street looking north from Broome St.

Cooperatives took the place of the old Hoe Printing Plant on the lower part of Grand Street. "First Houses" had been built with W. P. A. assistance and Vladeck Houses, near Corlears Park was started as a City Housing project and was extended with federal aid. In our central area, some of the worse tenements were torn down and others boarded-up, but otherwise conditions did not seem to change. One limited dividend apartment project for about 90 families was built on Stanton Street under the State Housing Laws and a private builder erected a modern apartment house on a 100-foot site on Clinton Street as late as 1938, but these projects were too small to have any influence in the area and they were built for middle-class tenants, not for the inhabitants of cold water flats.



POPULATION CHANGES
1930-1940 Percentage
Map 1V

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JAMES FELT & CO., INC.
362 FIFTH AVENUE N.Y.C

LEGEND:

- SUBWAY STATION
- ▣ PUBLIC PARK
- ⊙ PUBLIC SCHOOL

PART II

Population Analysis

The most consequential impact to our area was the halt of immigration to this country. By 1940 the population had fallen to one-third of what it had been at its height.¹ But this absolute decline in numbers was only one aspect of the change that had taken place. The average age of the population had increased considerably. The immigrants who had come to the Lower East Side were generally young adults who had large families with numerous children. In 1920, in the five census tracts under study, more than 40 per cent of the total population was under 21 — a proportion higher than that of Manhattan's which was very high at the time. Within the next twenty years this percentage decreased radically in all of the tracts while in tracts 36 and 16 it fell to less than that of Manhattan whose family size has become notably small.

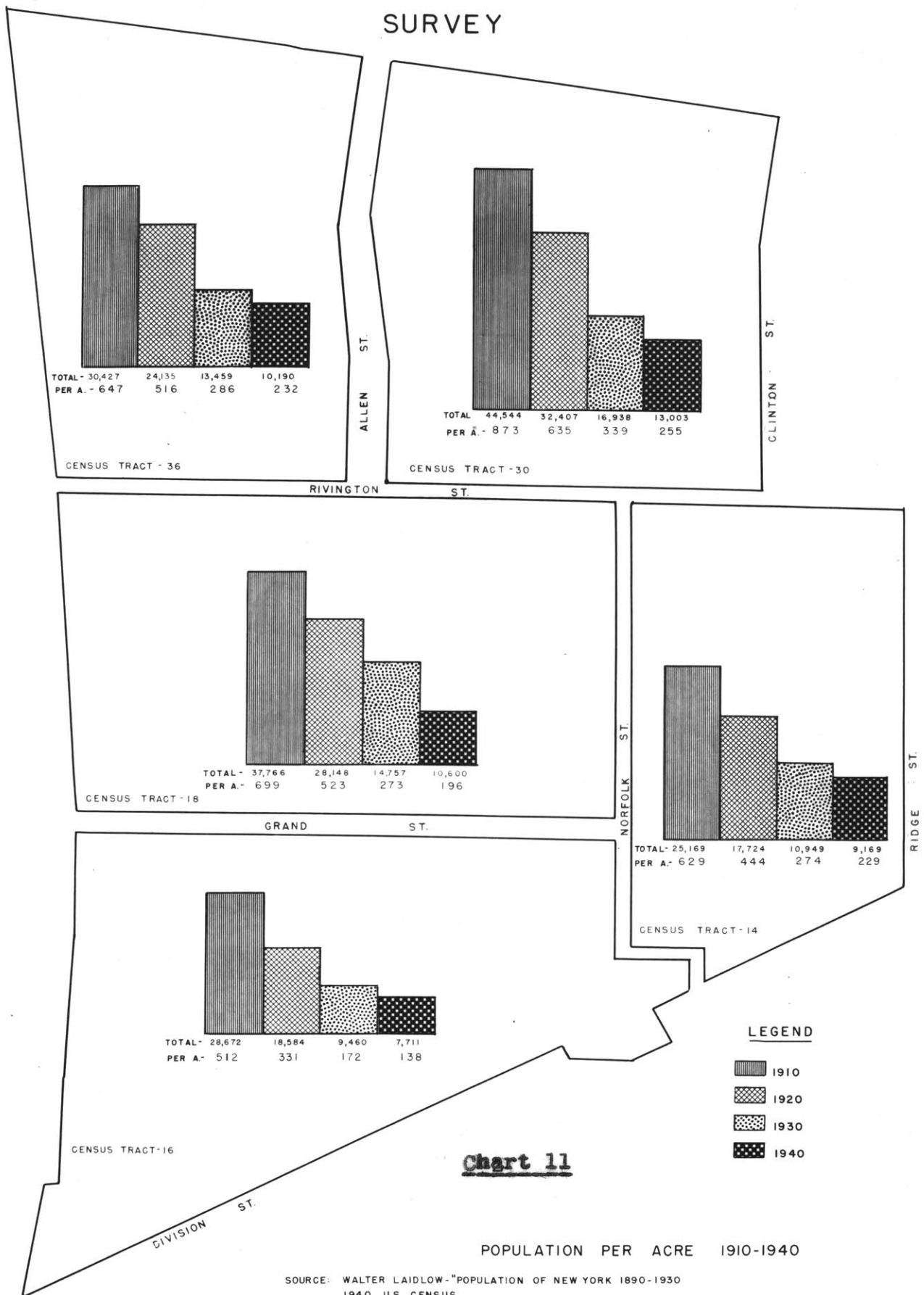
Table I

Percentage of Population under 21: U. S. Census Tracts

<u>Year</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>Manhattan</u>	<u>N. Y. City</u>
1920	45	43	45	43	42	35	
1930	35	39	40	38	37	30	
1940	23	29	26	29	21	24	30

1. See Chart II: Population per Acre.

UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT SURVEY



Perhaps the most dramatic evidence of this general decline in the youth population is the change in the school population of the whole Lower East Side during these years. In 1923 there were 85,607 children enrolled in the elementary schools while in 1944 this had² fallen to about one-fifth, only 16,633 children.

Within our study area the smaller proportion of youth cannot be ascribed merely to a smaller family size. There has been a selective migration outward that has left a larger than "normal" residue of older people and a selective migration inward that has added to them. In 1940, while only 28 per cent of the New York City population was over 45 years old, in tracts 16 and 36 this proportion was over 41 per cent and was 38 per cent in³ tract 18.

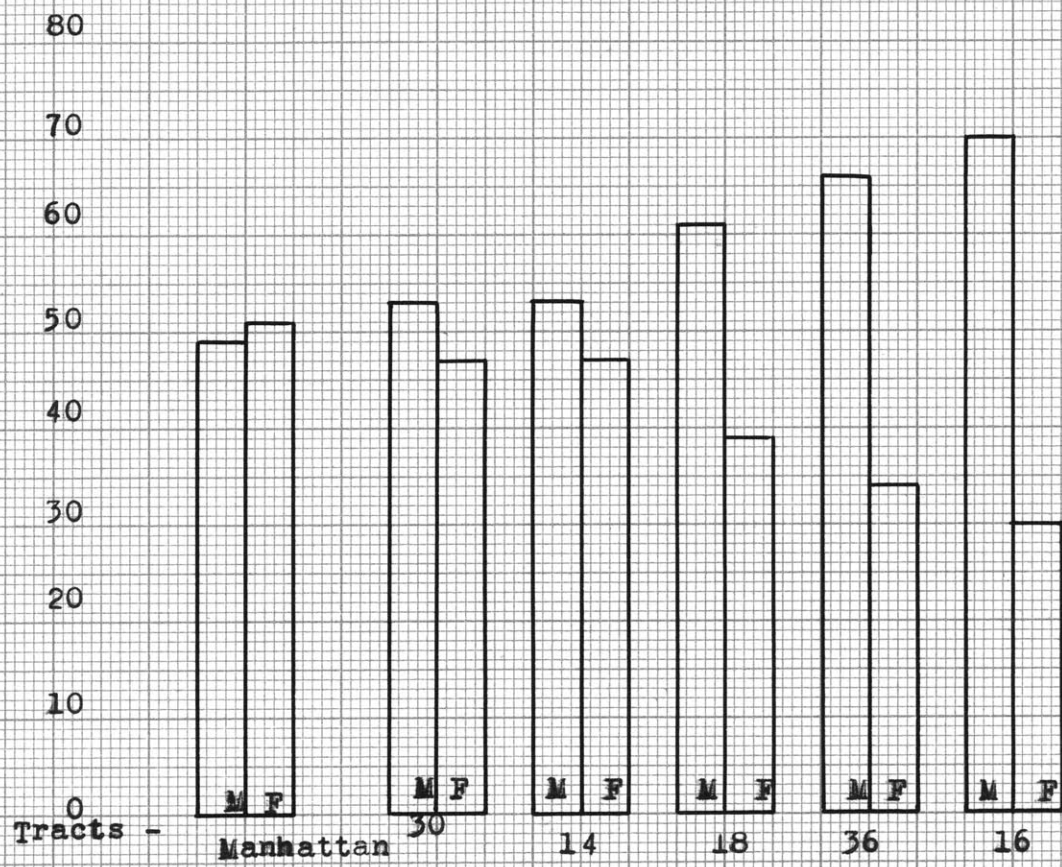
The population within the three western tracts shows a striking unbalance of male and female population.⁴ If we isolate the age groups over 35 to eliminate the more balanced younger groups, the preponderance⁵ of single men becomes even more accentuated. In tract 16

2. National Jewish Welfare Board, "Survey of the Cultural and Recreational Needs of the Jewish Population of New York City" September 1946, vol. 11, Part IV, p. 18 (mimeographed confidential survey).

3. 1940 Census.

4. See Chart III.

5. See Chart IV.



Percentage of Male and Female Population

in five census tracts - 1940 Census

Chart 111

there are, it seems, almost four men to one woman in the population over thirty-five.

Most of the single men are foreign-born, largely of Italian, Greek, and Chinese origin. Perhaps the most striking case of all is to be found among the latter group, although the Italian population of single men is far greater in absolute size.

Table II

Chinese Male and Female Population: 1940 Census *

Census tracts	36	30	18	14	16
Males	58	69	839	164	862
Females	14	1	39	10	119
Ratio female/male	.24	.01	.05	.06	.14

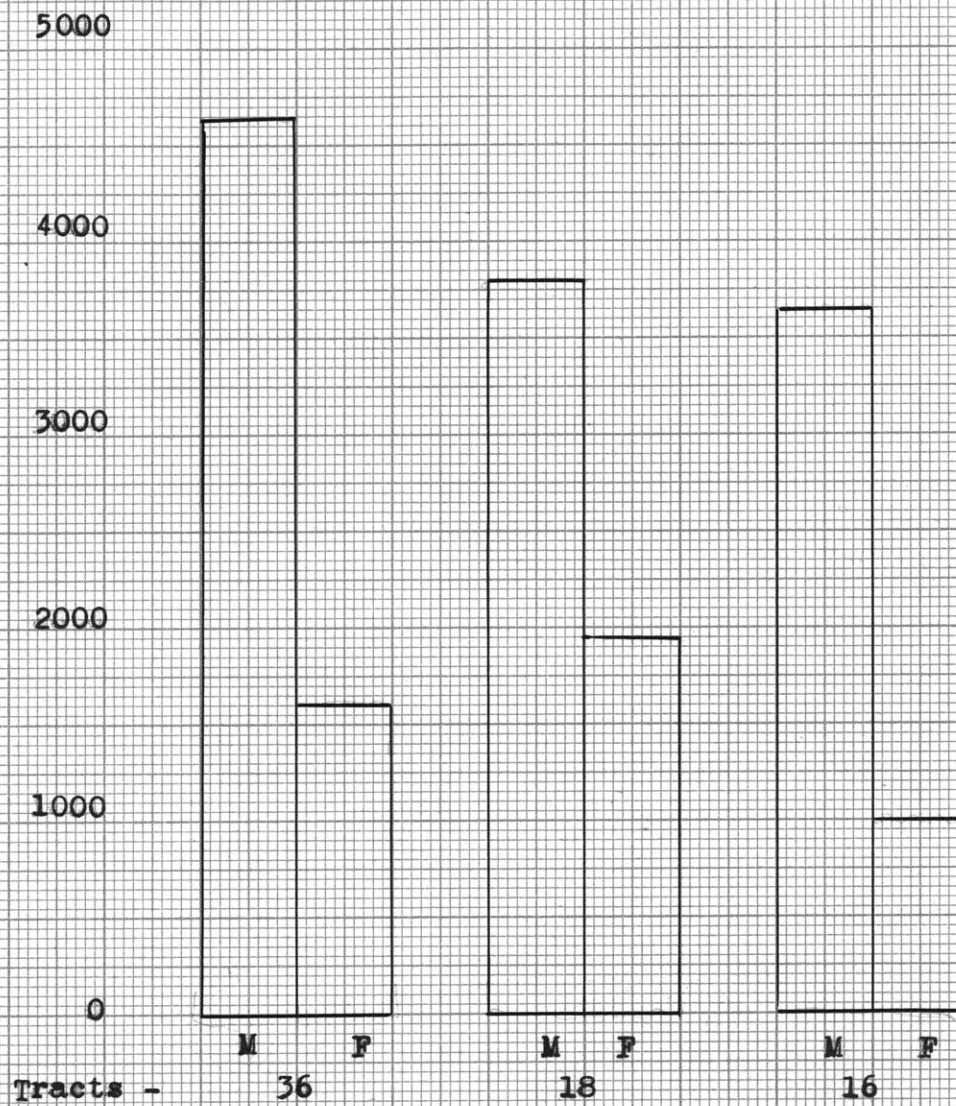
* Taken from "Other Races" category.

The number of single men shown by the census figures indicate that this is a large boarding house type of population. The percentages of single person households within our area corroborates this. With the exception of tract 14 this rate is higher than that of Manhattan with its large boarding house population and is as much as three times that of New York City.

Table III

Percentage of Single Person Households: 1940 Census

New York City	8 per cent
Manhattan	16 " "
Tract 36	21 " "
" 30	19 " "
" 18	17 " "
" 14	16 " "
" 16	25 " "



Population over 35 by Sex

1940 Census for three Census Tracts

Chart 1V

Racial Characteristics

The last great wave of migration into the Lower East Side was that of the Jewish population from countries in southern Europe, Poland, and Russia. In 1892 it contained 75 per cent of the Jewish population of New York City. By 1903 this was down to 50 per cent; 1916 — only 25 per cent and was down to 20 per cent by 1920.⁶ Today the Jewish population is still the dominant group on the Lower East Side with about 43 per cent of its total. This denotes a high concentration inasmuch as Jews make up only 18 per cent of the total population of Manhattan and 26 per cent of that of New York City.⁷

Within our five census tracts the Jewish population seems to be concentrated today only in tracts 30 and 14. In these tracts there is found a more normal age and sex distribution indicating that family size is more nearly like that of the rest of New York City. In the more westerly tracts,— 36, 18 and 16, there has been a gradual displacement of the Jewish population, particularly by the shift of population of Italian birth or parentage from the "Little Italy" district west of the Bowery.

6. Adams, T., et al., "Population, Land Values, and Government", Regional Survey of New York and Its Environs, 1929, Vol. 11; p. 63.

7. Jewish Welfare Board, op. cit., p. 18.

Some indication of this displacement can be gained from a comparison of the school enrollments in the western and eastern tracts.

Table IV

8

Percentage Changes in the Jewish Population in Schools

	<u>1923</u>	<u>1930</u>	<u>1935</u>	<u>1940</u>	<u>1944</u>
"Western" schools					
P.S. 42	97	47	40	34	34
P.S. 65	62	51	34	36*	40
"Eastern" schools					
P.S. 160	97	91	83	78	75
P.S. 4	98	94	85	85	80

*('P.S.65' became a Junior High School)

The concentration of population of Italian stock within the area can be best illustrated by the census data on "Heads of Families".

Table V

Percentage of Italians among the Foreign-born Whites
Who are Heads of Families: 1940 Census

<u>"Western" Tracts</u>		<u>"Eastern" Tracts</u>	
Tract 36	52%	Tract 30	11%
" 18	29%	" 14	5%
" 16	37%		

A more recent and clearly discernible movement into the area has been made by the Chinese spreading southward and eastward from the over-populated Chinatown, with an ever-growing concentration in tracts 16 and 18.

Table VIPercentage of Chinese to Total Population *

	<u>Manhattan</u>	<u>Tract 18</u>	<u>Tract 16</u>
1920	.2	-	.7
1930	.6	1.2	5.4
1940	.7	8.3	12.7

* These figures derived from "other races" classification of the U. S. Census and while only the Chinese fit this classification in this area this does not apply to the whole of Manhattan in equal measure.

Negroes have been moving into the area in greater numbers, particularly since the depression. High vacancy rates made some landlords willing to break down racial barriers. The low rentals were an inducement for the negroes to leave the higher rental area of Harlem and they have been spreading through the area ever since. While not highly concentrated, they seem to be located in some of the worst housing quarters, particularly in the section about Seward Park and Division Streets which is very shabby. In 1940 they were over 5 per cent of the population in census tract 16 and it can be expected that the 1950 census will indicate a larger percentage in that tract and an increase in the other tracts.

It would be misleading to leave the impression that the area is made up only of the four above-mentioned population groups. The 50 per cent of the population that is foreign-born is made up of other groups, such as Greeks,

Turks and Gypsies. But there are less easily categorized people who have moved into the area from all parts of the city and from many different parts of the country. The Lower East Side was, during the 'thirties, the largest low rental area in the city and as such it attracted numerous families of limited means without regard to their racial origin.

Population Density and Trend

Population density figures have their greatest value for comparative purposes in residential areas with similar types of land usage and coverage. In an area congested with non-residential uses, such as this one, they convey little concrete information about living conditions within the area.⁹ The lowest density is in tract 16 which includes 2 large park areas and the central business concentration within its boundaries. Tract 30 is the highest density tract although it has lost more population than some of the others had at their peak. It is, despite its heavy losses in population, one of the two areas, characterized by a greater stability of population type.

9. See Map III: Population per Block.

UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT SURVEY



Occupational and Income Analysis:

Employment Status

The percentage of the population over fourteen that is in the labor force in our area, does not differ materially from that of the rest of the city. However, since there are few single adult women, the fact that the percentage of women in the area who are in the labor force is the same as in the rest of the city, indicates that a larger percentage of married women work outside the home. Female unemployment in 1940 was recorded only slightly above the city average. Male unemployment, however, was very high, ranging up to 43 per cent of the labor force in tract 36 as compared to 15 per cent for the city. As in other characteristics there was a sharp distinction between the western and eastern tracts. While 36 and 14 had high rates of unemployment, tracts 14 and 30 had rates in the low twenties, only slightly above the 18 per cent average of Manhattan. Tract 18 was mid-way with 30 per cent unemployed.

Occupations

As might be expected, there are very few men in our five census tracts who were employed in professional or semi-professional occupations. There are a considerable number of peddlers and small storekeepers who make a living from the meagre earnings of the profusion of shops on the Lower East Side. The percentage of skilled craftsmen and

foremen is about the same as the rest of Manhattan while the number of clerical workers falls considerably lower than that of Manhattan or the rest of the city. The three census occupations classifications in which this area seems to have a decidedly higher percentage employed than the rest of the city, are those of operatives, service workers (except domestics), and laborers.

Table VII

Major Occupation Groups by Percentages: 1940 Census

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Tracts</u>					
	N.Y.C.	Man.	36	30	18	(16 and 14) *
Operatives, etc.	20	16	25	26	23	24
Service workers (except domestic)	13	22	24	21	30	23
Laborers	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>11</u>
Total	39	44	63	54	62	58

* These percentages were taken from the New York Welfare Council estimates. Since their data was by health tracts, census tracts 16 and 14, being in the same tract, counted as one. Otherwise tract 14 would show a resemblance to 30 and tract 16 to 36.

Income

The income of the people living in this area is low. Since there is no census data on income the best source is an estimate derived from the monthly rentals. It has been reliably estimated that in New York families, which in 1945 were paying less than \$20 a month rent spent approximately

25 per cent of their income for rent while those paying from \$20 to \$30 for rent spent approximately 23 per cent¹⁰ of their income. On this basis about 50 per cent of the household units in these tracts were making less than \$960 a year in 1940, while only about 20 per cent were making over \$1,560 a year or \$30 or more a week.

Table VIII

Monthly Rentals Paid by Household Units: 1940 Census

	Per cent paying \$20 or less	Per cent paying \$30 or less	Per cent paying over \$30
Tract 36	45	78	22
" 30	53	80	20
" 18	53	81	19
" 14	42	71	29
" 16	52	87	13
Manhattan	14	37	63 *
New York City	4.4	18.3	81.7

* Manhattan has a high percentage of the very poor and very rich of New York City but few in the middle incomes. This produces the difference in percentages between it and New York City as a whole.

The poverty of our area can be best measured by a comparison with the rest of the population of New York City. Among the households of the city, less than 5 per cent were on the same low level of income as approximately one-half of those in our community. Only one-fifth of the New York City households earned incomes as low as about four-fifths of those in the five tracts under

10. Estimate used by Consolidated Edison's "Survey of the New York City Market", 1945.

11
study.

Within our area the differences between the five tracts appear to be relatively slight except between tracts 16 and 14. Only about 13 per cent of the households in tract 16 earned more than \$30 a week in 1940 compared with about 30 per cent in tract 14.

Summary of Population Analysis

The rate of population decline in our area was smaller for the decade between 1930 to 1940 than it had been during the preceding decades. Although the previously dominant population group seems to be continuing its outward migration, it has been replaced by successively lower income groups with a low proportion of youth and a high proportion of single men who have passed their prime. This trend has not been uniform since the more easterly portion of the area has been able to retain a stable population group while the western portion, with its greater commercial concentrations and unfavorable neighborhood conditions, has been declining as a residential area.

-
11. There may be a slight difference in the income percentages of New York City since the census data used included only those with rented units. However, the median value of owned homes in New York City was \$5,400 in 1940 which suggests that the New York income figures may be higher than that estimated from rentals.

This area has had a population increase since the war because of the housing shortage. The extent of this increase will probably be determined only by the next census. However, if the ratio of young women with perambulators, to be seen along Norfolk Street or Attorney Street as compared to the number along Allen Street, is at all proportional to the number of veterans who have settled in these respective neighborhoods, then it can be expected that the 1950 census will not show any new trends.

Housing Conditions

Housing conditions within our area are poor. The criteria by which their low level can be measured are of several sorts. One of the most all-embracing is rentals. From careful studies that have been made very low rentals have been shown to correlate closely with the worst housing conditions within a city.¹² The median rentals in this area are only about one-half that of New York City or of Manhattan. As shown by Table VIII, on rentals, about one-half of the dwelling units occupied in 1940 fell into the lowest 5 per cent rental category for the whole of New York City. Since there was a high vacancy rate in the area in 1940, particularly among the worst housing units, it can be assumed that the present state of full occupancy has given the area an even larger percentage of occupied housing units of the lowest rental category.

Another of the criteria that have been used to delineate slum areas is that of age of building structures. This cannot be applied indiscriminately since the condition of a dwelling unit does not necessarily correspond with age.

12. Hoyt, Homer, "The Structure and Growth of Residential Neighborhoods in American Cities", (Federal Housing Administration, Washington, 1939) pp. 49-57.

However, within the area, almost all the dwelling units constructed before 1900 fall into the "old law tenement"

13
type of structure.

"The 'old-Laws' were erected in the 'eighties and 'nineties to house the flood tide of immigrants from Europe. Speculators seized the chance for a killing. They divided the blocks into 25' x 100' lots and ran the price of land up as high as \$20 a square foot. The builders packed every legal inch of lot, from side to side and nearly from front to back with 5 to 6 stories of flimsy wood and masonry. A typical floor had 4 flats, 14 rooms. The two rooms on the front and the two on the rear got some light and air. The other ten were dark and fetid, their only contact with the outside being a narrow air hole required by the 'advanced' law of 1879.

This law also required inside toilets in place of 'yard' toilets so they were crowded into the dark hallways. Fireproof halls and stairs and safe fire escapes were not thought of until much later. Each flat had a cold water tap, a chimney hole for the coal stove, too often cockroaches, and a rent that the traffic would bear.

Although subsequent legislation has forced some improvements in them, in the mass, they make a world of darkness, ill-health and frustration. In the summer they steam, and the tenants stifle. The old folks lean out of the windows to catch a breath of air, while the kids dodge cars below. In the winter they are draughty, and cheerless inside and out." 14

Table IX

Dwelling Units by Year Built: 1940 Census

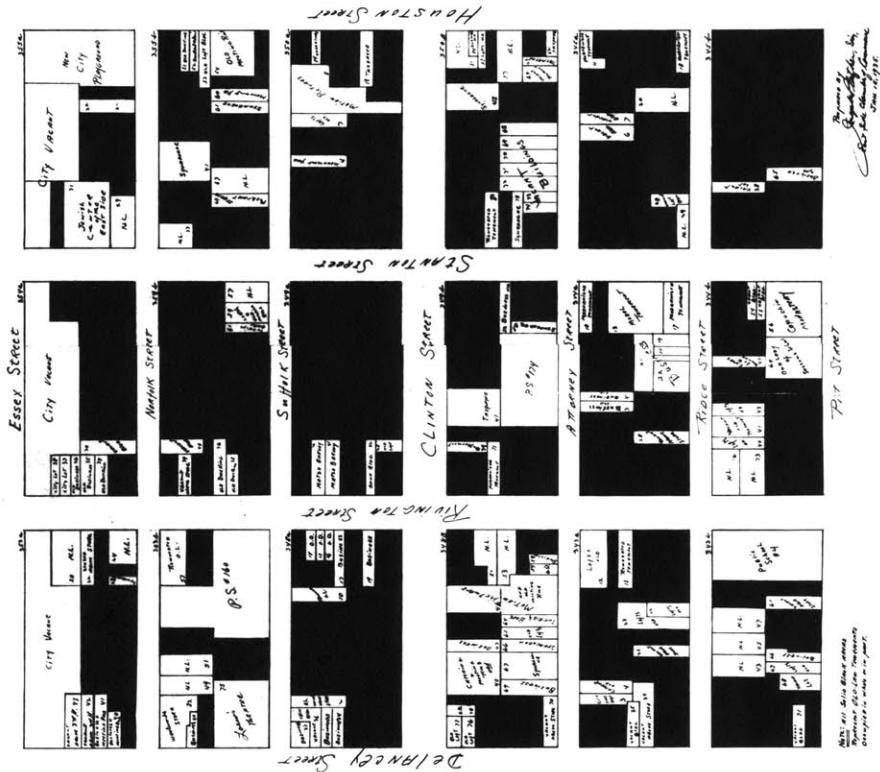
	<u>1899 or earlier</u>	<u>1900- 1919</u>	<u>1920- 1940</u>
Tract 36	72.5	23.0	4.5
Tract 30	64.0	29.0	7.0
Tract 18	74.8	25.0	0.2
Tract 14	70.0	28.0	2.0
Tract 16	52.7	46.0	1.3
Manhattan	39.0	38.0	23.0
New York City	22.0	32.0	46.0

13. See Map V: Dwelling Units Built Before 1900.

14. Thorson, Phil, "The Relation of Tax Delinquency in Slum Areas to the Housing Problem", Citizens' Housing Council of New York, 1941), pp. 7-8.

Old Law Tenement Concentration

By JOSEPH PLATZKER,
Secretary, East Side Chamber of Commerce and Research Assoc. in Land Economics
at The School of Land Economics



LAND USE These 18 blocks are all 200 x 400 feet each or cover an aggregate area, exclusive of the public streets, of 1,440,000 sq. ft. Approximately 1 percent of this area is unrestricted, while 99 percent is zoned for a business district. The zoning authorities have apparently given no consideration in the past to the predominance of residence in this area. More than 600 retailers, however, are in business here, but store vacancies along several thoroughfares have been increasing steadily during the past five years. Pushcarts along the curb have shown no decline along Rivington Street. A summary of land utilization of the area shows the following: 367 old-law tenements; 8 old dwellings; 21 new-law tenements; 1 model tenement built under the State Housing Law; 4 renovated old-law tenements; 5 thoroughly modernized old-law tenements with mechanical refrigeration; 13 old loft buildings; 28 business buildings; 2 matzo bakeries (formerly old-law tenements); 2 old catering buildings; 3 motion picture buildings; 2 yards used for making tombstones; 2 buildings used as undertaking establishments; 3 turkish baths; 1 pushcart stable; 1 bank building; 1 meeting rooms; 1 new Woolworth Store Building; 1 Jewish Centre; 11 religious buildings; 1 Fire Department station; 3 public schools; 1 city playground; 8 buildings vacant above stores; 2 vacant lots (sites of recently demolished old tenements); and 19 vacant and boarded-up tenement and loft buildings.

Map V

From Table IX it can be seen that about 70 per cent of the dwelling units in our community were in the "old law" group in 1940 as compared with little over one-fifth for the whole city. Of the relatively high percentage, of "new law" tenements in tract 16, most of them are over 40 years old, and the speculative construction and poor maintenance on many of them makes them little better than the "old laws". The small number of dwelling units that have been built in the area since 1920 are good, but they have been built for a middle-income group and are not representative of the general level of housing.

Table X

Percentage of all dwelling units reporting sanitary and plumbing conditions that required either MAJOR REPAIRS or were lacking either RUNNING WATER, A PRIVATE FLUSH TOILET, or a PRIVATE BATH (1940) *

Tract 36	38%
" 30	48%
" 18	47%
Tracts 14 and 16)*	50%
Manhattan	23%
New York City	13%

* These percentages were computed from Health Tract data of New York Welfare Council in which census tracts 14 and 16 are combined.

The above table requires no explanation except to repeat that the New York City percentage should be used for comparative purposes since the Manhattan figure represents the other slum areas of the West Side and of Harlem as well as the Lower East Side.

While central heating may not be as critical a need as sanitary facilities, it has become customary within New York City and offers another method of judging housing conditions. About one-half of the dwelling units in our five census tracts lack central heating while the percentage is only about 15¹⁵ for the entire city.

The only category of housing condition in which our area did not differ appreciably from the rest of New York was in the per cent of population living in rooms containing 1.51 persons or more. This percentage was, in all tracts, larger than that of the city percentage of 3.9 but only in tract 36 did it go as high as 8 per cent or more than twice the city average.

These poor housing conditions have been reflected in the outward migration from these tracts, in the low rentals¹⁶ demanded, and in the high vacancy rates. The 1940 census showed that while vacancies in Manhattan had fallen off since the 1934 Real Property Inventory, in our area the vacancies had increased in every tract but one. Since there were a large number of structures torn down in this area during those 6 years, it would appear that the housing demand within this area had fallen even more than the figures

15. New York Welfare Council's Tables on Central Heating.

16. See Map VI: Average Monthly Rent.

AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT PER APARTMENT

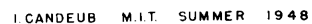
SOURCE: 1940 CENSUS

The map shows a grid of streets and apartment buildings. The streets are labeled as follows:

- Vertical Streets (from left to right):** Chrystie St., Forsythe St., Grand St., Sara D. St., Roosevelt St., Delancey St., Stanton St., Rivington St., Broome St., Hester St., Orchard St., Ludlow St., Essex St., Norfolk St., Suffolk St., Clinton St., Attorney St., East Broadway.
- Horizontal Streets (from top to bottom):** Houston St., Stanton St., Rivington St., Delancey St., Broome St., Hester St., Orchard St., Ludlow St., Essex St., Norfolk St., Suffolk St., Clinton St., Attorney St., East Broadway.

The average monthly rent per apartment for each building is indicated by a number inside the building's rectangle. The rents range from 13 to 48. For example, the building at the intersection of Grand St. and Sara D. St. has a rent of 17, while the building at the intersection of East Broadway and Division St. has a rent of 16.

SOURCE: 1940 CENSUS



indicate. Conditions today, are of course, those of full occupancy.

Table XI

Percent of Dwelling Units Vacant 1934-1940 *

<u>Tracts</u>	<u>1934</u>	<u>1940</u>
36	23	26
30	23	25
18	15	20
14	24	23
16	24	31
Manhattan	18	11
New York City		7.3

* Source: 1940 Census and 1934 Real Property Inventory

PART III

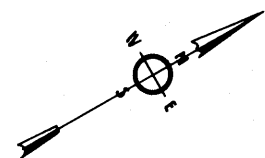
Business Analysis:

Introduction

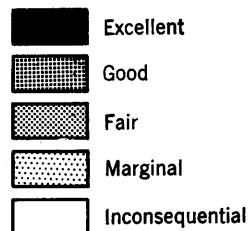
The central part of the Lower East Side is its dominant business area.¹ In it are located the concentrated retail and wholesale centers and some light manufacturing activities. It has consistently grown in importance through the years as the neighborhood stores have fallen in importance and other business activities on the Lower East Side have diminished. Today, the commercial activities on many of the streets in the area are of greater importance than the residential uses of the streets and are the sole supports of the high land values. No planning for this area would be realistic if it did not give careful consideration to the needs of the different centers located here and make a careful estimate of their future growth or decline. For these reasons a comprehensive survey of the present business activities is required.

Delancey Street has been called the "gateway to the Lower East Side." It might have been more correct to have called the intersection at Delancey and Essex Streets the door to the Lower East Side. This is the location of the subway stations for the 8th Avenue - Houston Street subway

1. See Map VII: Stores on Lower East Side.



STORE RATING



Map VI

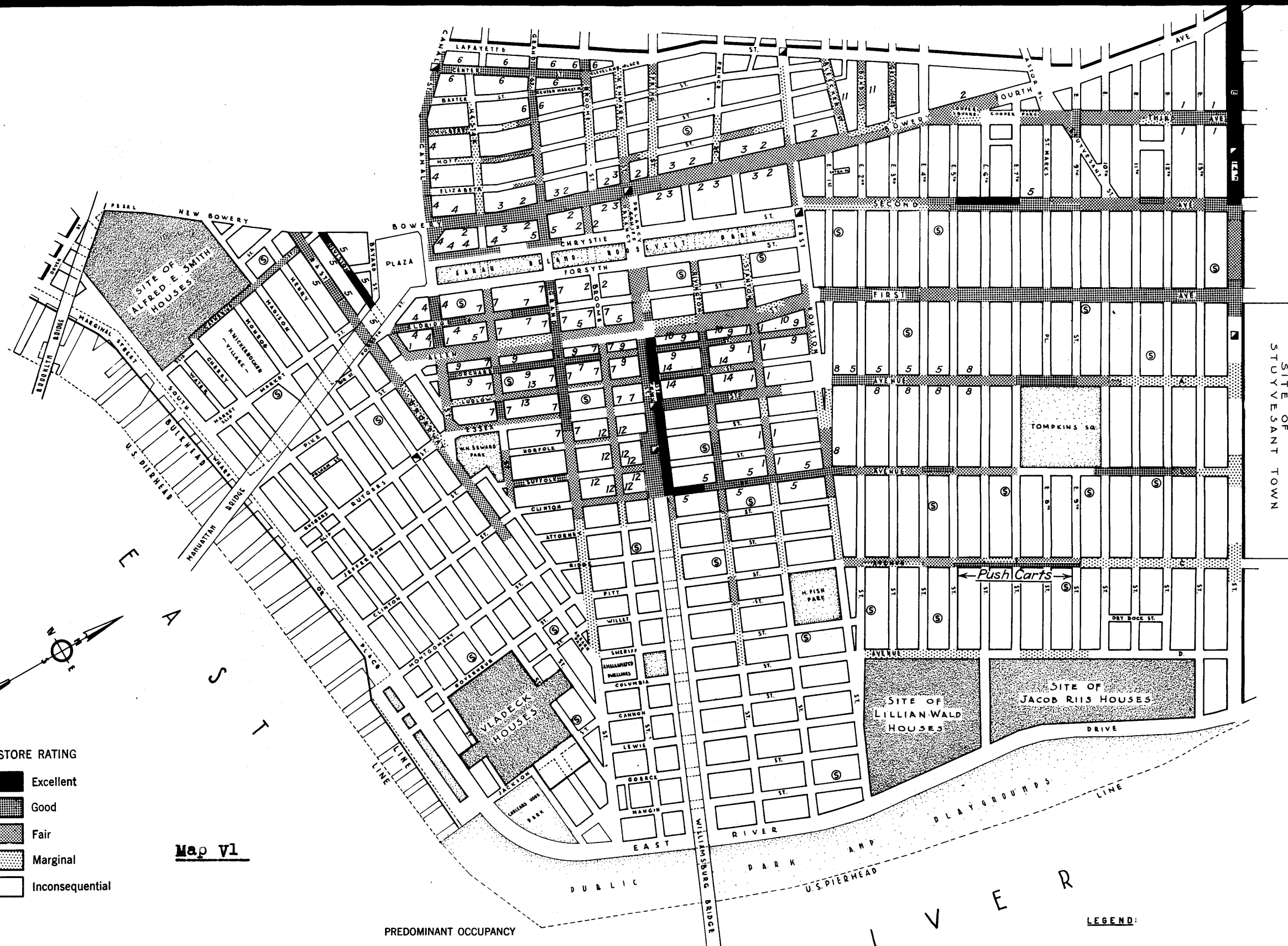
PREDOMINANT OCCUPANCY

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Men's clothing | 7. Textiles-yarns, draperies, silks, novelties. |
| 2. Restaurant equipment, store and display fixtures, etc. | 8. Furniture |
| 3. Lodging houses - bars, restaurant, cheap clothes. | 9. Drygoods and knitwear |
| 4. Jewelry. | 10. Neckwear, suspenders, etc. |
| 5. Women's wear | 11. Remnants, skins, etc. |
| 6. Tools, mill supplies & machinery. | 12. Printing |
| | 13. Hardware. |
| | 14. Toys and Stationery. |

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LEGEND:

- SUBWAY STATION
- PUBLIC PARK
- Ⓢ PUBLIC SCHOOL

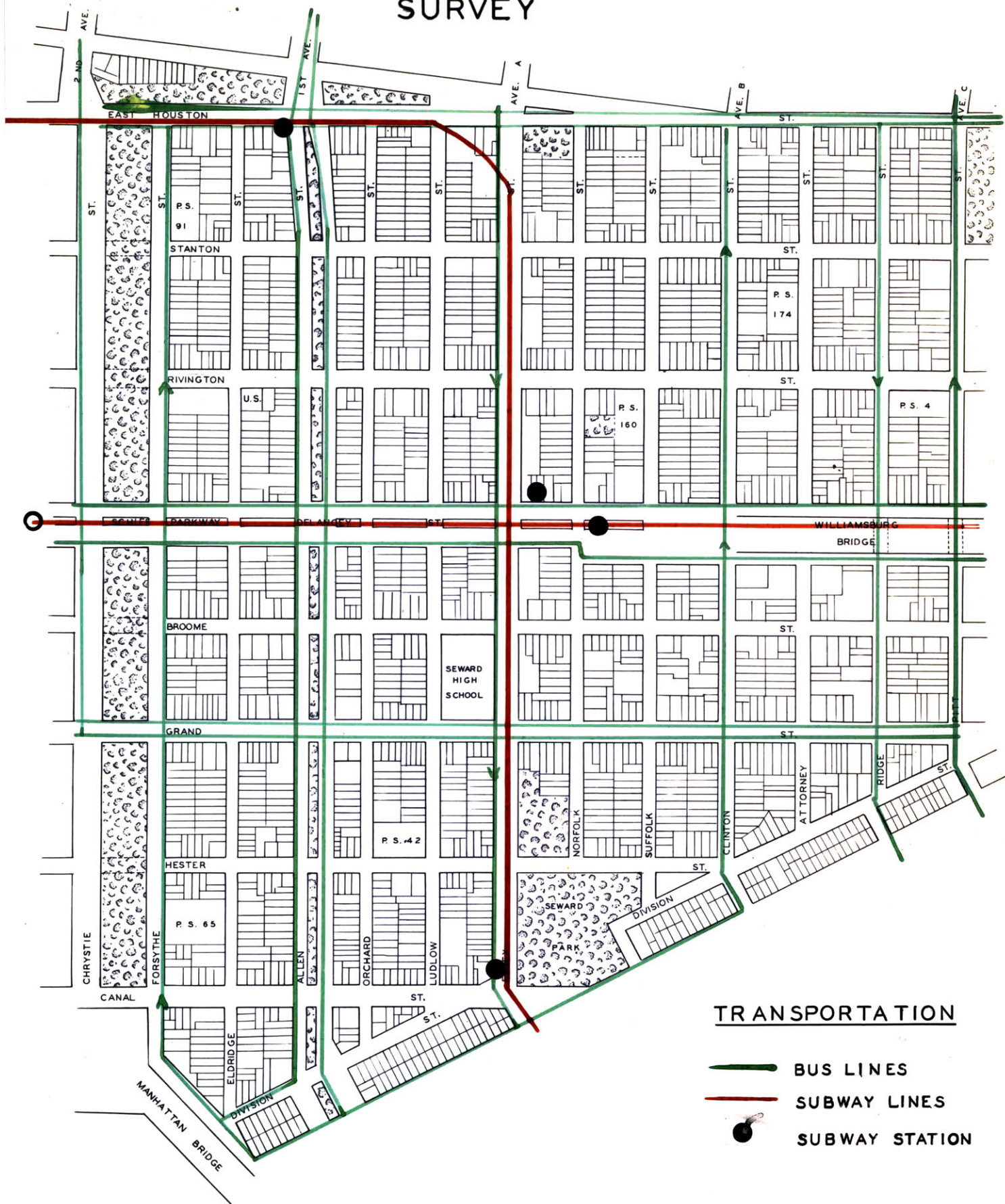


and the Broadway-Jamaica line of the B. M. T. subways, plus the Williamsburg Bridge trolley lines. There is also a very active bus line stopping at this corner that comes from a crosstown trip on 14th Street where it collects a large number of residents from the low rental areas of the West Side of Manhattan who patronize the shops of the Lower East Side. The number of passengers at this intersection is very large. The number of fare collections for the B. M. T. line in 1947 made here were 6,153,899, and for the Independent line it was 7,616,618.² For both of these systems this number of fares was only bettered by the stations in the "downtown" areas of Manhattan and at terminal points in the other boroughs. The total number of subway fares collected here for the year was 13,770,500 or about 40,000 a day, and does not include the bus and trolley collections. Not all of these fares can be derived from the population living in the immediate vicinity, nor can it be assumed that the Delancey Street station is the only rapid transit facility available to the residents of the whole Lower East Side. The Independent Line's station at East Broadway and Canal Street has over 5,000,000 fares a year and the one at Houston Street between 2nd Avenue and Allen Street has almost 5,000,000 fares a year.³ We must, therefore,

2. "Transit Record," Board of Transportation, March 1948.

3. Ibid.

UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT SURVEY



TRANSPORTATION

-  BUS LINES
-  SUBWAY LINES
-  SUBWAY STATION

SCALE: 0 100' 500' 750' 1000'

conclude that the Delancey Street business concentration draws a large number of non-residents into this area.

Retail Centers

The greatest concentration of retail shopping on the Lower East Side is on Delancey Street, Orchard Street and Clinton Street. These streets represent different types of shopping and will be discussed individually.

Delancey Street: The northern side of Delancey Street between Orchard Street and Clinton Street contains the best retail frontage on the Lower East Side whose yearly rental is over \$500 per front foot average.⁴ It is primarily a center for men's wear. It contains 6 men's clothes shops, 6 shoe stores, and 5 hat shops and others catering to men, plus a Woolworth store and other shops. Most of the men's clothing stores are branches of large chain groups carrying a lower price group of men's ready-made suits. These have been located here only since the 'thirties but seem to have prospered sufficiently to have attracted more.

The second largest group of stores is made up of 16 restaurants located for the most part on the southern side of Delancey Street, many of them known throughout the city. These restaurants do a very considerable evening, as well as day-time business. The bulk of their evening

4. Statement from local business man, July 1948.



Intersection of Delancey and Essex Streets



Looking east on Delancey St. from Allen St.

patronage comes from evening shoppers, businessmen, Lower East Side's Jewish Theatre patrons, and from those attending fraternal order meetings in the many meeting rooms and halls of the Lower East Side.

Clinton Street: The section of Clinton Street between Delancey Street and Houston Street is noteworthy for its concentration of women's shops. Its largest single groups are the 43 dress shops and the 18 millinery stores that have located here.⁵ The number of women's shops increased during the depression years as women concentrated more of their shopping in an area noted for its lower prices. Many of its stores have been modernized and it gives every indication of remaining a prosperous center for small shops.

Orchard Street: This street became well-known during its pushcart days when it was possible to buy from a peddler's cart anything from a pound of apples to a grandfather clock, with the works missing, - or an expensive, finely calibrated set of machine tools. Since 1939 these have been moved to the Essex Street Public Market, but the street still has most of its former color and activity, and draws a large part of its trade from outside the Lower East Side.

Orchard Street between Delancey Street and Rivington Street, is largely given over to men's wear. Seven large

5. Platzker, Joseph, East Side Chamber News, July 1946, p.13.

men's pants-matching firms are located here. Other stores sell woolen yard goods, men's underwear, shirts, ties, etc. From Rivington to Houston Street, there is a greater emphasis on other dry goods. There are 32 retail linen shops and 13 curtain and bedspread shops located on this street. It "is the Lower East Side's greatest outlet for sample goods, bankrupt stocks, and manufacturer's rejects."⁶

This street still conducts a large amount of its business from sidewalk stands in the Old World manner. A survey made in 1939 found that there were 172 of these stands in these few blocks, 134 operated by storekeepers and 38 leased by peddlers.⁶ However, some of these stores have been modernized by the more progressive merchants and many have been increased in size by combining stores. Some of the frontage on this street is expensive and bears rentals of from \$200 to \$300 per front foot per year.⁷

Essex Street:- The Essex Street Public Markets have 237 "permittees" located in the market. There are 430 stalls in the market but many have more than one stall.⁸

6. Platzker, Joseph, op.cit., June 1939, p. 110.

7. Statement from local business man, July 1948.

8. Letter from H. C. Kurdeliski, Acting Director of Markets, City of New York, August 12, 1948.



Orchard Street north of Delancey Street



Looking north on Orchard Street from Delancey St.

The market has a large variety of goods with the greatest emphasis on food items from fruits and vegetables to fancy groceries.

The largest group of stores on the western side of Essex Street are 7 furniture and floor-covering stores, most of them of considerable size and occupying entire buildings.

Stanton Street: This street has been noted for its concentration of men's clothing shops. However, these stores have suffered severely from the decrease in population in the area and from the competition of the low-price chains on Delancey Street. In 1930 there were 79 men's clothing stores located here. They fell to 45 in 1934 but only 25 are left today.⁹ It is difficult to make any predictions about their future prosperity.

Rivington Street: This shopping center, except at important intersections, serves a predominately local trade. Its greatest concentration seems to be in housefurnishing, electrical, luggage, and photographic shops.

Other Retail Centers

Canal Street between the Bowery and Allen Street is an important jewelry wholesale and manufacturing center. As an offshoot there is a considerable amount of retail jewelry trade conducted here and there are a number of prosperous men's clothing stores that cater to businessmen.

9. The number of stores of different types have been taken from surveys made by the East Side Chamber of business conditions and reported in the East Side Chamber News at intervals over the last twenty years.

The one block of Suffolk Street between Hester and Grand Streets is a very active food market that serves the surrounding local community.

Grand Street at one time was Lower Manhattan's leading shopping center. At the present time the nature of its commercial enterprises varies from one block to the next. From Forsyth Street to Essex Street it is primarily a wholesale center whose favorable location earns it a rental income of about \$250 per front foot per year.¹⁰ From Essex Street to Norfolk Street almost every store is a yarn shop selling both wholesale and retail. This center has been established for the last fifty years but it boomed in the early 'thirties of the depression. Today their mail order volume alone is reputed to be about a million dollars a year.¹¹ They advertise nation-wide in small-town publications and at least a thousand samples and circulars are sent out almost daily to women inquirers all over the United States.¹² Several have converted entire six-story buildings for their use, one at a reputed cost of over \$20,000.

A small but nationally known group of stores are the brass and antique shops located on Allen Street. These

10. Statement from a wholesaler on the block, July 1948.

11. Platzker, J., op.cit., July 1946, p. 13.

12. Ibid., June 1936, p. 5.



The Grand Street yarn center
(on Sunday)

have been established in the same place for decades, have a wide following through the country and have become one of the sights of New York City.

Only the most important retail groups have been mentioned. This area abounds with others such as the 14 silk and woolen shops on Hester Street, the tailor's trimmings shops, etc. They are one of the leading attractions of the area to shoppers from all parts of the Metropolitan Region, who discover a tremendous variety of goods that are seldom found elsewhere.

Wholesale Activities

Several different types of wholesale activities are located within our area. They vary in the type of product that they handle, in their needs for space, and in the degree to which their locations are centralized.

Food and Allied Products

This group of wholesalers and processors are most scattered through the area. They are the only group who do a very considerable proportion of their business with the stores of the Lower East Side. They include wholesale fruit and produce dealers, grocery and dairy products distributors, wholesale wine merchants, wholesale confectioners, pickle works, spiced meat producers, bottled beverage distributors, and dried fruit and nut wholesalers. Of these only the wine merchants and dried fruit and nut dealers are grouped together. The others find a center unnecessary and prefer the lower rentals of subsidiary streets. Their stores do not function as markets but as distributing points for their trucks. Within the last few years some have built new taxpayer units that express this function of light warehousing. These have substituted a truck entrance for offstreet loading and unloading plus space for storage and an office for the more customary store lay-out.

The high costs of trucking on Manhattan's congested

streets had created the conditions for this type of ware-¹³house decentralization as far back as 1900. Bulk food items are more cheaply distributed from local centers to the small retailer than from the central market area at the piers. The population concentration on the Lower East Side, the fact that land values are lower here than in other parts of Lower Manhattan, and its excellent accessibility have made the present location of these activities a logical development.

The Jewelry Center

A second group of wholesale and manufacturing activities of major importance has been the jewelry group located about Canal Street. The dominating factor of this location has been the existence of some of the city's major diamond exchanges on the Bowery near Hester Street. At one time this market and the one located on Maiden Lane were the only ones in the city. With the movement northward of the retail districts and the development of the mid-town hotels it appeared certain that the jewelry wholesalers would eventually move uptown to cater to the department stores¹⁴ and to the visiting buyers. A considerable impetus was given this movement when the Chrystie-Forsyth Street

13. Filipetti, G., "The Wholesale Markets," Regional Plan of New York Metropolitan Region, Vol. I-B, pp. 44-50.

14. Ibid., pp. 28-30.

widenings were undertaken and a large number of firms were dislocated. The seemingly ever-growing number of "Bowery Bums" has created problems in retaining female employees for any long period of time and has further increased inclination to move among the wholesalers. Hitherto there has been some inertia because no other locations were available but at the present time the concentration about 47th Street seems to be expanding its quarters and plans are being made to construct a large diamond exchange there. If the present plans for a Crosstown Expressway are carried out, all of the present diamond exchanges on the Bowery will be forced to look for new quarters and there may be a large-scale movement uptown. However, it is probable that the large number of small firms centered on Canal and Eldridge Streets, who are dealers or producers of jeweler's supplies, costume jewelry, watch crystals and parts, jewelry castings, and electro-platers, will remain in the area to avoid the high rentals uptown.

Loft Uses

Loft uses, other than that by jewelers, are scattered through the area with the greater proportion locating below Grand Street, between Forsyth and Essex Streets. The present shortage of loft space within the city has created a considerable demand within this area for all

vacant loft space and has caused some tenement conversion to loft uses. Some of the items being manufactured are electrical fixtures, housedresses and aprons, and other hand-sewn items.

The Dry Goods Center

The most dominant wholesale activity in the area and in the Lower East Side is that connected with textiles and "general merchandise". These centers of wholesale activities are sharply centralized and located on the following streets:

<u>Streets</u>	<u>Stores occupied by wholesalers</u>
Eldridge	130
Allen	103
Orchard	113
Ludlow	<u>84</u>
Total	430

To that number should be added those located on Canal, Hester, Broome, and Delancey Streets. The combined volumes of business transacted by these stores is out of all proportion to their number on the Lower East Side and they are undoubtedly its leading business activity. By streets the concentrations are as follows:

15. Platzker, J., op.cit., July 1946 (entire issue).



The Orchard Street wholesale center on
Saturday.

Eldridge Street	49	wholesale cotton and dry goods
(Division to Delancey)	11	" silk and woolens
	10	cotton goods jobbers
	15	wholesale jewelry, etc.
	5	tailor trimmings
Allen Street	17	brass and antique shops
	36	necktie mfrs - wholesale
	9	quilt manufacturers
	9	wholesale ladies' and children's wear
Orchard Street	49	wholesale hosiery and ladies' underwear
(Division to Delancey)	15	general merchandise jobbers
Ludlow Street	13	wholesale hardware
(Division to Delancey)		
(Delancey-Houston)	15	wholesale toys, stationery
	5	wholesale fruits and nuts

In the leading groups there are 95 wholesalers selling cotton goods and dry goods and 71 selling hosiery and ladies' underwear.

The wholesale activity in this area is characteristically in the hands of small independent jobbers. Their customary gross profit is from 10 to 15 per cent and they do a gross annual business of from \$50,000 to over 16 a million dollars. Their customers are the small retailers within the metropolitan region, the New England states, the mid-Atlantic states, and to some extent from the Midwest, and South and to Mexico and Canada. In a number of cases they also sell to other jobbers located either within the region or in such centers as Boston, Cleveland, Baltimore and Houston.



The Orchard Street wholesale center
looking south to Division Street -
on a Saturday.

The presence and prosperity of the centers, despite the general movement of wholesale activities northward along Broadway, may be ascribed to a number of factors. They do virtually no business with department store buyers so location near the main retail centers is of little importance to them. In their present location they have lower rentals than Broadway's, rapid transit service is available from a number of points, and an amount of parking space almost sufficient for their needs is available while Broadway has none. But of the greatest importance is the fact that these centers are excellently adapted to suit the needs of the small retailer.

Most of the jobbers in the area specialize within their lines. Thus, to a large extent, they supplement each other and make available to the retailer a selection of prices, styles, and quality considerably greater than he can find in a similar amount of space along Broadway. This specialization is also the means by which relatively small dealers can buy large quantities within their line of goods and offer the retailer bargain prices. In effect, these two factors of lower prices and wider selection must compensate the retailer for the time that he spends in shopping as against the fact that he could place an order through a visiting salesman.

Since the average small retailer is tied to his store

during the week, the wholesalers in this area, unlike those on Broadway, stay open on Sundays (except in the summer) and keep closed on Saturdays instead. This is vitally important for these businesses, since some do as much as 70 per cent of their weekly volume on Sunday alone.¹⁷ The small business trade is further catered to by permitting them to buy in less than standard lot units, enabling the retailer with a limited capital and volume of trade to carry a selection of goods that he would otherwise be unable to stock.

There are indications that these centers have become highly stabilized and show no inclination to move. Years ago the tendency existed for an expanding firm to leave the area and move up Broadway. During the depression Broadway landlords made many favorable bids to have these trade centers move but by that time the advantages of this location had become firmly recognized. The new expansion that has occurred in the area has been done by the enlargement of quarters. Many firms occupied two stores and tore down the intervening wall. Some have expanded upward and are using one or two stories of the tenements above them as storerooms, while others have converted entire buildings. An indeterminate number now own the buildings they are located in giving them another good

17. Statement from Joseph Platzker, economic consultant.

reason for remaining. There is no evidence that this business area is on the down-grade. Instead, "the wholesale trade is a greater factor in the business life of the community today than it has been at any time in the past
¹⁸
 twenty years."

The general analysis made above applies to most of the trade centers equally well but there are some distinctions that should be made. Most of the textile group, handling such goods as silks and lingerie with a high per unit value, can stock many thousands of dollars worth of goods without resort to storerooms or basements. In contrast, the wholesale hardware merchants on Ludlow Street, between Hester and Broome Streets, function in a large measure as storehouses for their retail customers. Although they are specialized within their line of goods, they carry upwards
¹⁹
 of 100,000 different items. Some of the hardware dealers have converted 6-story tenements to supply them with an adequate amount of storage space. In the toy center on Ludlow Street, between Delancey and Rivington Streets, where both sides of the street are lined with wholesale toy jobbers, storage space is also an important requirement in their business. Their goods has more bulk per dollar value than that of textiles, and their holiday peaks require that they build up large stocks for quick disposal. Further north on Ludlow Street, two of the larger housefurnishings

18. Platzker, J., op.cit., July 1946, p. 21.

19. Filipetti, G., op.cit., p. 53.

jobbers have reconverted entire tenements and another one has constructed a taxpayer warehouse on the site of a former tenement.

The grouping of housefurnishing jobbers in this area requires some attention because the previous statements about the functions of the area as a market does not apply to them in equal measure. Most of their business is done through salesmen in the field while their stores serve primarily as storehouses and offices. The big ones are as large and larger than their competitors on Broadway. They are located here because they are paying less for space than they would on Broadway and their trucks can load with greater ease. Some of the smaller ones in the area have in some cases expanded from a slim line of notions and in other cases have come into the line only recently. They are woefully short of space in their cramped quarters and perform very uneconomically. Their line of goods is frequently made up of the more shoddy items because their credit rating is not good enough for the big manufacturers. Since they have no specialized line to sell they get only the poorer retail accounts, frequently those that the larger wholesalers consider too poor a credit risk to handle. Their future is very uncertain but this is the type of business where credit is generally easy to obtain and there are always new entries to take the place of those who fail.

Parking needs

Where the wholesale trade is concentrated it tends to dominate the streets. Although the textile groups do not require any bulk shipping that blocks the sidewalks or ties up street traffic, many of the Ludlow Street hardware and housefurnishing firms do block both street and sidewalk. All of these centers require a large amount of parking space for cars of their own and their customers. The ordinary passenger car serves frequently as a convenient delivery vehicle for the wholesaler while many retailers load their cars on their shopping trips to avoid shipping delays and charges. During the pre-holiday rushes the opportunity to make immediate pick-up on goods gives this area an advantage over Broadway firms that have no parking facilities. Fortunately there is very little through traffic on Eldridge, Orchard or Ludlow Streets so the present congestion creates little nuisance despite the fact that these streets are frequently blocked. However, the curb space is insufficient and there is an overflow of cars through every street in our area. Some vacant lot owners have been given variances for parking. Room for 200 cars is available on Houston and Essex Streets, and on Clinton and Division Streets there is space for 50 cars. These are clearly insufficient to clear the streets to any appreciable extent.

Summary of Business Activities

Retail trade on the Lower East Side has been becoming increasingly centralized. The specialized shopping areas of Clinton, Orchard, Delancey and Essex Streets, centered as they are about the focal point of transportation on the Lower East Side, bettered their position during the 'thirties despite the depression and population losses. With the increase of population to be expected from the new public housing projects, their future seems relatively secure.

The wholesale centers within this area have won a secure position for themselves by specializing and catering to the needs of one group - the small retailer. Because of the prosperous business conditions of the present time, they are expanding somewhat. However, any considerable expansion would be contingent upon an increase in the amount of trade done by their customers. Since the position of the small retailer is not likely to improve, it is unlikely that these centers will grow to any extent in the future.

A second type of wholesale activity in the area is that of storing and distributing. A large proportion of the present distributors serve a local market and although they have been improving their facilities, they cannot be expected to expand very much. However, other distributors have found the area convenient for the location of their businesses

because of its accessibility and the fact that its land costs are lower than that of other parts of Lower Manhattan. For these reasons tenement houses have been converted to storeroom uses and new taxpayer storerooms have been constructed during the last few years.

This area has retained some of its former loft activity along Canal Street, Forsyth Street, and on other streets in the area. The present shortage of loft space has created an increase in the demand for space within the area. On the basis of lower costs than Broadway and less traffic congestion it might attract more small loft manufacturers who have no pressing need to locate in the more central areas, if loft space were made available to them.

PART IV

Neighborhood Conditions

The first part of this study was a descriptive analysis of the dominant elements within our community - its people, its housing, and its main business activities. We will now deal with the general neighborhood influences and facilities.

Aspects of deterioration

It is a startling fact that an area with approximately 50,000 people has no section of it zoned for residential purposes.¹ It is even denied the slight protection of being zoned for retail uses. There can be little doubt that it would be economically unjustifiable to exclude the present commercial centers, but we have already indicated that these are sharply centralized. The availability of stores with low rentals, along predominately residential streets has, on the other hand, resulted in some undesirable uses.

The Lower East Side has always had too much store frontage. But its large population could, at one time, support a great number of small stores. It has been estimated that at its height there was a grocery store located at every 200 feet on the tenement streets.² But neighborhood

1. See Map VIII: Zoning.

2. Platzker, J., op.cit., July 1946, p. 16.

stores have fallen off sharply both as a result of population decreases and the increasing concentration of trade in central areas. From the store surveys conducted during the last twenty years by the East Side Chamber of Commerce, some figures are available to show the extent of this decrease on the Lower East Side.

Table XII

The Decrease in Neighborhood Stores on the Lower East Side

<u>Stores</u>	<u>1930</u>	<u>1933</u>	<u>1939</u>	<u>1946</u>
Butcher shops	556	440	329	162
Candy, soda	529	482	386	232
Barber shops			449	271
Shoes			118	84
Restaurants and Lunchrooms			413	294
Drugstores	165			84
Groceries			605	424

Despite their decrease in numbers, it has been estimated that 75% of the occupants of the 8,337 stores on the Lower East Side do an annual business of less than \$10,000³ each. These are the small candy, grocery, and other neighborhood stores scattered on the side streets.

The great amount of store frontage on the Lower East Side has usually been reflected in a large vacancy rate. Even today when space is at a premium throughout the city, there can be found streets, within the area, like Norfolk,

3. Platzker, J., op.cit., July 1946, p. 10.

between Stanton and Houston Streets, with seven vacant stores on its eastern side and nine stores either vacant or used as storage space, on the western side. Although these vacant and boarded stores exert a very depressing effect upon the neighborhood, some of the uses that they have been put to in this area are even more disagreeable. The excess of stores within these neighborhoods made them available at very low rentals and encouraged their use for purposes other than that of either retail or wholesale marketing. Although these stores are now used for a wide number of purposes, we will discuss only the more important groups.

The Factory-store

Ever since the end of the war there has been an acute shortage of loft and factory space in New York. Many small manufacturers have had difficulty in locating space while others have been evicted when larger firms acquired their space to use in expanding their own facilities. Many have come into this area and utilized vacant stores as workshops. Since in most cases these have been converted to their present use by the sole expedient of painting their front windows some ubiquitous color, there is a danger that their working conditions may be scarcely better than that of the old sweat shops that made the Lower East Side so notorious.



.... empty stores and parked cars.....

Other non-retail uses

There are a large number of stores used by tin-smiths, plumbers, carpenters, and other mechanics. While there is nothing objectionable to these trades, their stores are used primarily to store tools and other supplies and as workshops. They carry a very small stock for sale and present a very poor appearance, particularly on those streets where they are located in some concentration.

There are a number of stores being used as offices of one sort or another. Some have no more than a desk and file with no identifying name on the door or window, and with someone present only at rare intervals.

Particularly uncongenial for a residential neighborhood are the few employment offices located about Norfolk and Rivington Streets. These have no interior waiting rooms, and the groups of rough-looking men that gather in the streets all day are given a wide berth by the women and children in the neighborhood.

Scattered through many of the side streets are stores used by trucking companies as their offices. It has become a very common sight to see several large trucks parked in these streets in the evening between five and six while their crews sit about and talk or report to the offices for the next day's route.



Boarded building at the corner of Stanton and Suffolk Streets.



Trucks servicing a dry cleaning firm on Ridge Street.

The most blighting store use in the area has been the expansion of the old-clothes business. The Lower East Side has always been a center of this trade with most of the exports going to the South, to Africa and to India. Since the War, Europe has become a tremendous market and the business has boomed proportionately. There are, today, over 260 stores on the Lower East Side occupied in this trade of old clothes, old shoes, and old hats.⁴ They have spread from a nucleus in Division Street to every part of the area. Most of these stores act simply as storage rooms, and since their windows have been left unpainted they have a very blighting effect on the streets where they are located. Periodically their proprietors sort some of their accumulated stock - frequently on the sidewalks - and cart them away to the big exporters on Division Street and elsewhere in the vicinity, where they are sterilized, crated and shipped overseas. This entire business, because of the unsanitary nature of its product, its filth, and the danger of fire hazard because of the uncontrolled storing of these articles, should not be permitted in a residential area.

4. Platzker, J., op.cit., July 1946, p. 26.



Building at Hester and Ludlow Streets



Vacant building facing Seward Park

Table XIII
5
Miscellaneous Store Uses

<u>Street</u>	<u>Storage</u>	<u>Factories</u>	<u>Old Clothes</u>	<u>Total</u>
Forsyth	9	5	3	17
Eldridge	12	2	2	16
Allen	2	2		4
Orchard	3			3
Ludlow	11			11
Essex	2			2
Norfolk	30	5	1	36
Suffolk	15	2	5	22
Clinton	1		24	25
Attorney	14	2	8	24
Ridge	7	3	15	18
Division			47	47
Hester			5	5
Stanton			3	3
Broome			11	11
Grand			10	10
(approximation in our area from Suffolk to Pitt)				254

Slum abuses

It would appear that even these uses that are specifically prohibited within a business zone cannot be controlled. Variances have been granted to permit the operation of large parking lots on the lower part of Clinton Street, on Houston and Essex, Ridge and Delancey. Since these parking areas tend to lessen the concentration on the streets they do serve a useful function within the area. There is, however, little justification for other uses present in the area though prohibited by the zoning act in areas zoned for business. A most glaring example is a large rag cleaning

5. Compiled from figures in East Side Chamber News, July 1946.



Essex Street near Houston St. at five
o'clock in the evening



Empty lots on Allen Street with Orchard St.
buildings seen from the rear. This land has
been vacant for many years under city ownership
and is one of the most littered lots in the area.

and baling firm that has occupied two 6-story tenements on the northern end of Eldridge Street. Their loading and unloading generally occupies most of the sidewalk and the filth that they produce frequently spreads over a goodly portion of the street.

Official supervision seems to become lax when dealing with slum areas. It is doubtful whether the many stores being used for storage purposes fulfill the requirements of the law. It is most improbable that the health and fire authorities could not control the old-clothes business with more appreciation of the public interest. But the standards usually applied to other residential areas and that would immediately cause corrections to be made, are, it would seem, seldom applied to slum areas.

The most outstanding example of an abuse that is allowed to remain without any action being taken by the city authorities is the presence of boarded-up tenements. In a survey made last year, Joseph Platzker found "50 such rat-infested, eye-sore structures on the Lower East Side that have been unoccupied for more than a decade," and "there is no indication that they will be put to use again via modernization." He goes on to say that "bad as the littered sites of demolished tenements are, they are still to be preferred to the closed and boarded-up, rat-infested and debris-littered tenements." The city has the

5a. Platzker, J., "News", October 1947, p. 7.



power to take action against these boarded-up structures. The Department of Health could declare them a health menace and have them condemned. A New York State law passed in April 1938 gives the Department of Housing and Building the right to demolish a closed and abandoned house which is a "moral, health, or safety hazard to the neighborhood."⁶ If the owner does not demolish it 21 days after the department issues the order, then the department applies for a court order to demolish it. If the court order is not complied with in 5 days, the department may proceed to demolish it and charge the cost to the landlord as a lien.

Social Facilities

The Lower East Side is the center for a large number of fraternal organizations. It has been estimated that over 25,000 non-residents attend at least one of the more than 400 fraternal organizations that meet regularly in about 30 halls or in meeting rooms between 14th Street and East Broadway.⁷ Two of the largest of these meeting centers are on Clinton Street, near Delancey and a third is on East Houston and Suffolk Streets. Within our area there are also a large number of fraternal houses and synagogues that formerly served only the local Jewish population. Their members are now scattered throughout the city, but still meet regularly.

Other racial groups have their own social organizations.

6. East Side Tenants' Union, "Calling All Tenants", 1946, p.16.
 7. Platzker, J., op.cit., April 1948, p. 6.

Building at Ludlow and Hester Streets.



There is a Chinese fraternal club on Ludlow Street, near Canal Street, whose second story quarters are not nearly large enough for their present numbers. Some social club-café's occupy the second floor of loft buildings on Orchard Street near Grand Street. Other café-club combinations seem particularly prevalent on Allen Street between Rivington and Houston Streets. The whole of Allen Street, with its convenient double line of benches on its park strip, has become a favorite meeting-place in the area. Allen Street has become the single greatest rooming house district of the area and its large number of single men are very much in evidence on its benches. Another gathering point for the elderly men of foreign birth are the public courts for Bocci, an Italian version of bowling on the green, located at Allen and East Houston Streets.

There are a large number of settlement houses on the Lower East Side. Serving this area, the three most important organizations are the University Settlement, The Jewish Settlement House of the Lower East Side, located on Stanton Street, and the Jewish Educational Alliance on East Broadway. They all have active programs for the children and operate camps in the summertime. The Educational Alliance also has a very extensive adult program with a large participating membership.



Allen Street



East River Drive Park from the
Williamsburg Bridge

Parks and Playgrounds

The playground facilities for the area are Seward Park, Hamilton Fish Park, Sara D. Roosevelt Park, and a smaller playground on Houston and Essex Streets. All are very heavily attended except the Sara D. Roosevelt Park. The history of its development has already been described. When it was built it appeared that the wisest use of the space could be accomplished by leaving a maximum amount free for play activities and surrounding it with a raised belt of park to protect it from the outside traffic and to provide a promenade and benches separated from the play area. Its primary purpose was to serve as a play area for slum children sorely deprived of play space. Its recreation rooms had a very extensive program conducted for all ages of children by members of the park department recreational staff with the help of volunteers. It also served as a playfield for all the ball teams in that section of Manhattan and had organized tournaments.⁸

Ever since the war broke up the recreation staff this program seems to have disintegrated. The park department is not offering salaries large enough to get many recreational workers to carry on the work in this park, so only a limited program is carried out. The recreation rooms serve

8. Information on the Sara D. Roosevelt Park was secured by an interview with the present director of the park on July 16, 1948.



Seward Park



Sara D. Roosevelt Park

merely as ping-pong rooms and these are closed after six because not even a custodial staff is available to keep them open in the evenings. Today the park is no longer as much in demand as a playfield for ball games since the larger East River Drive playfields are now available. Its chief function appears to be that of a playground space for the adjoining schools - P.S. 91 and P.S. 65, now a Junior High. These schools use the area for their gym classes under the supervision of teachers and for other outdoor activities.

This playground area seems to be strangely unused at the present time in comparison with the other park areas mentioned. Although many of the women living in the adjoining tenements on Forsyth Street and on Chrystie Street do come here with their baby carriages and children most of the families in the heavily populated areas in the immediate neighborhood have an aversion to the park and many have placed an absolute ban on their children, forbidding them to go to the park except under supervision.

At first glance the reason for this unpopularity would seem to come from the park's use by the vagrants of the Bowery. These men are fed and given beds in the municipal lodging houses but are sent out to wander on the streets during the day. They tend to remain concentrated in groups on the Bowery but spread from that section into adjoining

Seward Park



streets. This park with its line of benches on both sides has become one of their more favored haunts, particularly in the summer time when its trees provide shade from the sun while its openness permits a breath of fresh air. These men do not molest the women and children that come to the park but their presence is considered objectionable. The sight of them lounging about is a disagreeable one. Their language is frequently obscene and there is an almost constant percentage of drunkards among them. Their most usual concoction, since Whisky costs too much, is a combination of shampoo and a cheap wine. The effects are most unfortunate and although the police make a round-up of drunkards three times daily, there are some present at almost all times.⁹

Despite the presence of these vagrants, the Sara D. Roosevelt Park would probably be a popular rendezvous in the area if it were not for its peculiar layout. The great arena-like stretches of asphalt that take up the largest amount of its space can only be considered useful for organized sports activity. The swings and other kiddy play facilities are little used because this area has little of the congeniality of the small, closed in, tree surrounded play areas in playgrounds like Seward Park. The park promenade along the sides is also a failure for a similar reason.

9. The police made 5,400 arrests for drunkenness in the Bowery during 1946. "East Side Chamber News," June 1947, p.6.

Seward Park



Its very straightness gives prominence to the presence of the Bowery characters. By contrast, Seward Park is carefully divided into many small parts, with a maximum of privacy afforded each part. The result is that there are at least a score of different groups to be found in the park at any one time. There can usually be found groups of old foreign-born women, young housewives, clusters of bearded Jewish-speaking men and of Italian-speaking men, of young Chinese matrons and of noisy and frequently drunk, husky negro workers. In the playground enclosures, at all kinds of play activities will be found children of all ages, while at the same time there are scarcely more than a handful of children in the much larger playground a few blocks away. There must be a reason for this disparity and the presence of Bowery inhabitants cannot be considered as the all-important factor.

The Bowery Influence

It is not within the realm of this paper to analyze the problem of the Bowery vagrants but inasmuch as they do affect our area a few general comments are pertinent. From what information is available the most general characterization that could be applied to the Bowery vagrant is that of a failure in the process of living. From their own accounts they could not face their problems in their home

Seward Park



10

towns and have been running away ever since. Most of them are from areas outside of New York who have drifted here because this is one of the few places that will give them shelter, demand nothing from them, and offer them companions who are on their own level. The average vagrant is a very gregarious person when with his own, and those who are not, the semi-schizophrenics, are looked upon with compassion by their comrades and treated with a great deal of solicitude. These men are not "trouble-makers". They frequent the dirty and grimy areas of the slums because they can pass unnoticed there. The steps of an abandoned house, the empty lot, the sidewalks under the elevated become their normal habitat. For this reason, in our area, the Bowery influence should be considered as one aspect of slum conditions. There might almost be an axiom stating that slum conditions breed slum conditions. Grand Street with its prosperous shops and wide street and sidewalks is little bothered by the Bowery even where it crosses it. One block of Grand Street, between Chrystie Street and the Bowery is, in fact, exclusively given over to bridal gowns and has some of the most decorative window frontage in the area. In contrast, Rivington Street with its dark narrow street, its walkdown entrances to basements and its walk-up stairs to second-story stores, its numerous

10. "Winners of Bowery Essay Contest" - "How and Why I came to the Bowery" East Side Chamber News, Sept. 1947, pp.6-7.



The stoop of a boarded building at Stanton St.

signs of all sorts and its general air of deterioration, frequently has "visitors" from the Bowery.

Summary of Neighborhood Conditions

The process of deterioration in this community seems to feed itself. Some of these neighborhoods seem to be passing through a cycle that starts with speculative tenements and overcrowding, passes through a period of increased obsolescence and loss of tenants that has the after-effects of high vacancy rates and boarded buildings and finally leaves large gaps of vacant lots and empty structures whose availability encourages uses of many sorts. This miscellany of uses is not calculated to increase the desirability of the area for residential purposes and it becomes frozen into an unusable condition where its development for business purposes is at best only haphazard and its further development for residential purposes becomes impossible under the existing conditions.



Rivington Street looking east from Allen St.



Rivington Street

PART V

Property Conditions

Property Ownership

Ownership of property on the Lower East Side, had by the 'thirties, largely been transferred from the original speculator-developers to local immigrant families.¹ The holdings of these owners were typically small and about 60 per cent of them had only one lot, in 1931.² Most of these holdings were heavily mortgaged. Seven of the banks in the area alone hold over 56 million dollars' worth of these mortgages at that time.³ When the vacancy rates mounted these small owners were hard-pressed to meet their mortgage payments and frequently suffered severe losses in order to retain their ownership. But they did not have the necessary capital to renovate their tenements or even to give them proper maintenance to make them more rentable. On properties heavily mortgaged, it was impossible to get further loans for alterations and the entire area was viewed as such a poor investment risk that virtually no institutional loans were being made.

The symptoms of an unhealthy real estate condition became glaring in the early 'thirties. Tax delinquencies

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1. Henry Street Settlement, "A Dutchman's Farm", 1939, pp.28-35.
 2. Platzker, J., "News", September 1931, p. 9.
 3. Lahm, E. A., "East Side Chamber News", July 1931, p. 17.

with arrears going back for years became widespread. The number of violations issued by the health department increased, but the owners could make no repairs. Finally, in 1934, with the election of the La Guardia reform government and an awakened public consciousness of slum conditions, this area came under critical inspection. The administration began to enforce the 1929 amendment to the Multiple Dwellings Law. Under that amendment, made to improve conditions in the old law tenements, buildings already standing were required to have fireproof halls and stairs, safe fire escapes, and other minimums of social decency that had been compulsory in all new housing after 1902.⁴ Many owners were forced to board up their tenements, losing all revenue, while others went even further into debt to meet the new requirements.

Banks and other institutions held mortgages on almost one-half of the taxable properties on the Lower East Side in 1935.⁵ They had seemed disinclined to foreclose during the first half of the 'thirties, although mortgage payments were, in many cases, not being met. They now found that tax liens and tax foreclosures would eventually make their investments a total loss. Consequently, during the few years between 1935 and 1939 there was a wave of

4. Thorson, Phil, op.cit., p. 13.

5. Platzker, J., "News", December 1935, p. 8.

foreclosures.⁶ Almost all of the foreclosures on property in our study area between the years of 1930 to 1947 occurred in that period. In the residential neighborhood about the University Settlement House - bounded by Forsyth, East Houston, Allen, and Delancey Streets - of a total of 164 properties in the area, 53 or 32 per cent were foreclosed during these years. When compared to the average for Manhattan of 7.5 per cent for this same period, we get an indication of the degree of the collapse in values.⁷ Only the predominately commercial streets in our area, whose revenue was not dependent upon residential use, were able to withstand foreclosure.

About 70 per cent of the foreclosures on the Lower East Side were made by institutions.⁸ These were very uncertain about the advisability of further increasing their investments and many merely closed their tenements. In a study made in 1937 it was found that of 906 tenements that had been foreclosed, only 48, or 5 per cent, had been rehabilitated while 444 remained unchanged and 414 were either boarded up or demolished.⁹ Since it became evident that these properties would continue as a drain unless improved, a large number of the foreclosed old tenements were

6. See Map IX: Foreclosures.

7. Thorson, P., op.cit., p. 10.

8. Ibid.

9. Platzker, J., "News", March 1947, p. 53.

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Source: Records of CONVEYANCES
New York Hall of Records

renovated during the years 1938 and 1939.

In our sample residential area about the University Settlement, a 1945 survey showed that 403 dwelling units out of a total of 1,457, or 28 per cent, were either extensively renovated or already had central steam heat and private baths.¹⁰ This is an indication of the limited extent to which large-scale renovations have been done in this area. The rentals required to recoup the expenses of alterations have, in the past, proved to be too high for the resident income group and necessitated attracting outsiders into the area.¹¹ Since this was possible only to a limited extent, even institutional owners have been hesitant in making improvements.

In 1939 a study showed that "the rents per room have fallen to such a low point (\$3 to \$6 a month) that they no longer yield any net return above operating expenses except where considerable amounts have been spent for alterations.

The Lower East Side is now the largest low rent area in

New York."¹² Another study made of a small section of the Lower East Side in 1942, made the observation that "any

owner who was breaking even could consider himself fortunate."¹³

10. James Felt Company, "A Survey of Property on the Lower East Side", November 1945. (This is a confidential report made for the Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank.) See Map X: Housing Conditions.

11. See Chart V: What Modernization Means.

12. Hoyt, H. and Badgley, L.D., "The Housing Demand of Workers in Manhattan", 1939, p. 22.

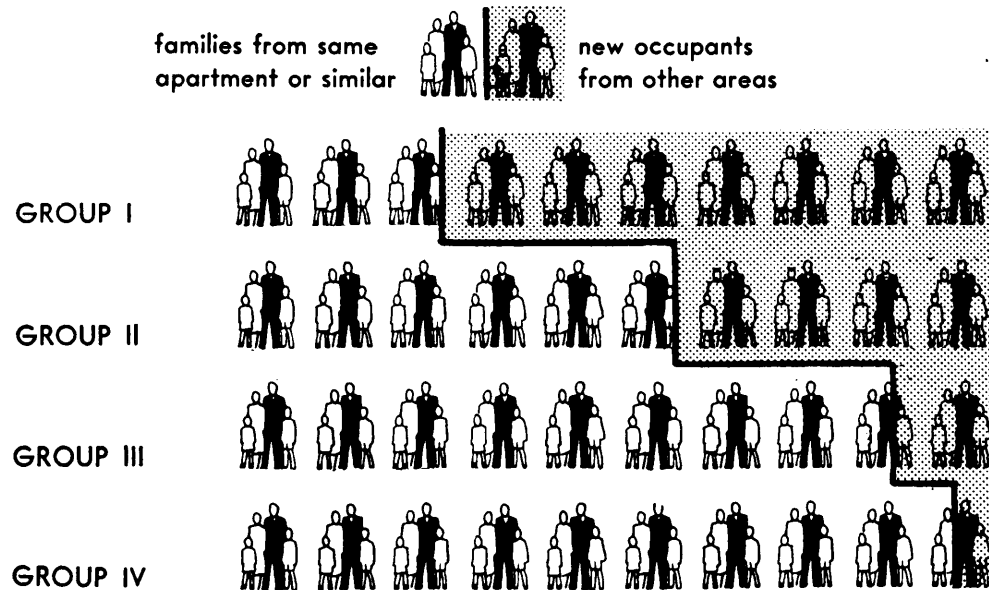
13. Thorson, P., op.cit., p. 13.

WHAT MODERNIZATION MEANS

IT MEANS HIGHER RENTS

COMPLETELY MODERNIZED excellent housing				
GROUP I	rent before	\$5.99	average per room	
	rent after	\$13.19	"	"
RENOVATED adequate housing				
GROUP II	rent before	\$6.17	average per room	
	rent after	\$8.52	"	"
VIOLATIONS REMOVED bad housing				
GROUP III	rent before	\$4.91	average per room	
	rent after	\$6.38	"	"
MISCELLANEOUS REPAIRS illegal housing				
GROUP IV	rent before	\$3.95	average per room	
	rent after	\$4.62	"	"

IT MEANS THE SAME FAMILIES CANNOT OCCUPY THEM



Source: A Dutchman's Farm - Henry Street Studies 1939

Chart V

Although the owners are somewhat better off today under full occupancy conditions, it is doubtful whether they may look forward to any long-term profitability. Even if low rentals become stabilized at a higher level than before, their high maintenance costs due to obsolescence is ever on the increase and as New York returns to a more normal vacancy rate, they can expect sharp inroads into their present occupancy. Only the commercial uses show any signs of remaining stable or of increasing in value.

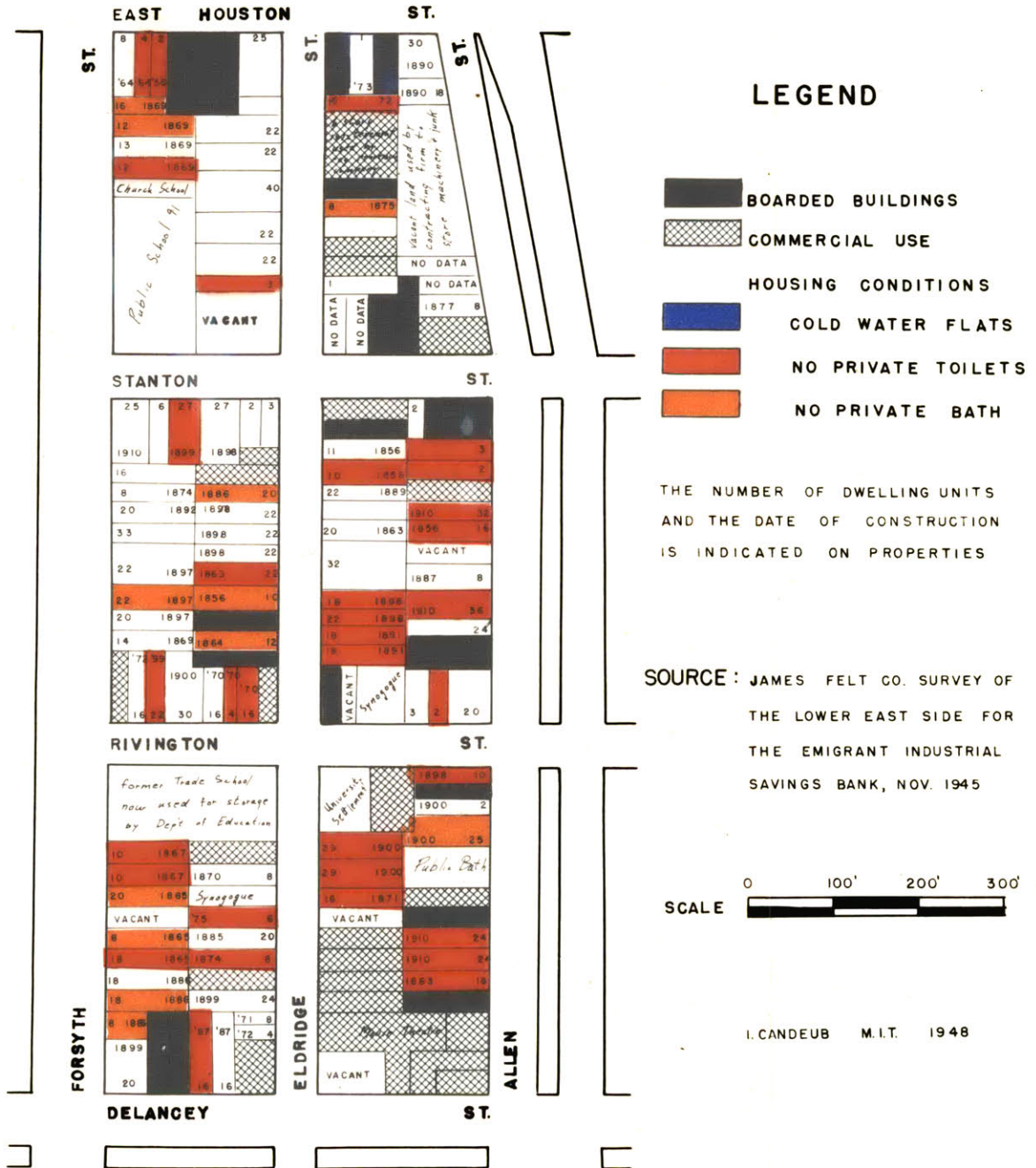
Property Values

Property values reflect conditions within a community and affect them insofar as they control the profitability of future developments. They are of particular importance on the Lower East Side, where inflated land values have been a crucial factor in preventing redevelopment. A study of these values is, therefore, an essential part of our survey. Since the pattern of changes within our area corresponds closely to the changes that occurred during the years on the whole of the Lower East Side, we will avail ourselves of a short study made by Joseph Platzker of land values in this larger area from 1904 to 1947.¹⁴

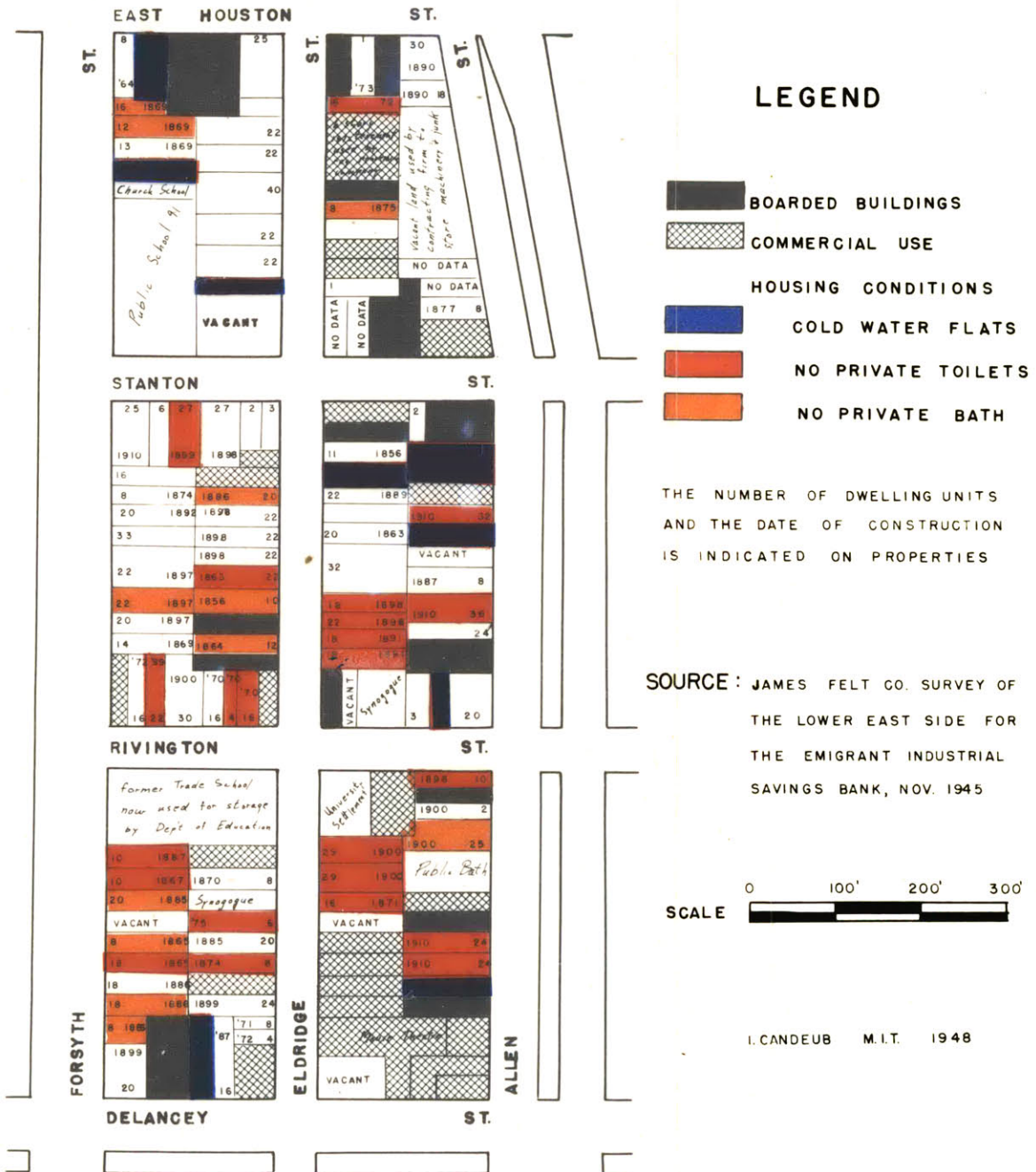
Land valuation on the Lower East Side rose steadily from 1904 to 1910. This was the result of both a great

14. The following paragraph was abstracted from Platzker's study of land valuations in East Side Chamber News, February 1947, pp. 6-8.

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population boom and a considerable new-law tenement boom. But land values went to an all-time high in 1913 when they were 54 per cent higher than they are now. With the coming of World War I in 1914 they started a steady decline and were about 20 per cent lower in 1919, a year after the war. Although new construction was very limited, land values started to rise again in 1920 and continued until they reached the second peak of the century in 1930. But the cause of the second rise differed from the first in many respects. There was a population decline throughout the decade and new construction was almost a negligible factor in the community. It was, however, the glorified era of guaranteed mortgages, speculative buying and selling of properties, and generally higher rentals. After 1930 land values receded slowly in 1931 and 1932, but broke sharply in 1933 and 1934, and were followed by a steady rise in the foreclosure of hundreds of mortgages that had never been amortized. They reached an all-time low in 1944. Land values started rising again during 1945 although housing rentals have been frozen by the OPA as of March 9, 1943. The full occupancy of most loft and store space at the best rentals in more than 15 years are among the leading factors that caused land values to rise 6 per cent from 1946 to 1947. Some of the most notable of these increases have been in the central business area of the

Lower East Side. Lots on Eldridge Street from Canal to Division Street, were increased \$3,000; on Canal Street, from Eldridge to Allen Streets were increased \$2,000; on the east side of Orchard Street from Broome to Delancey Streets, the average lot (25 x 88) was increased from \$21,000 to \$28,000 on land value; the west side of Ludlow Street from Delancey Street to Broome, was increased at \$1,500 per lot.

Table XIV

15

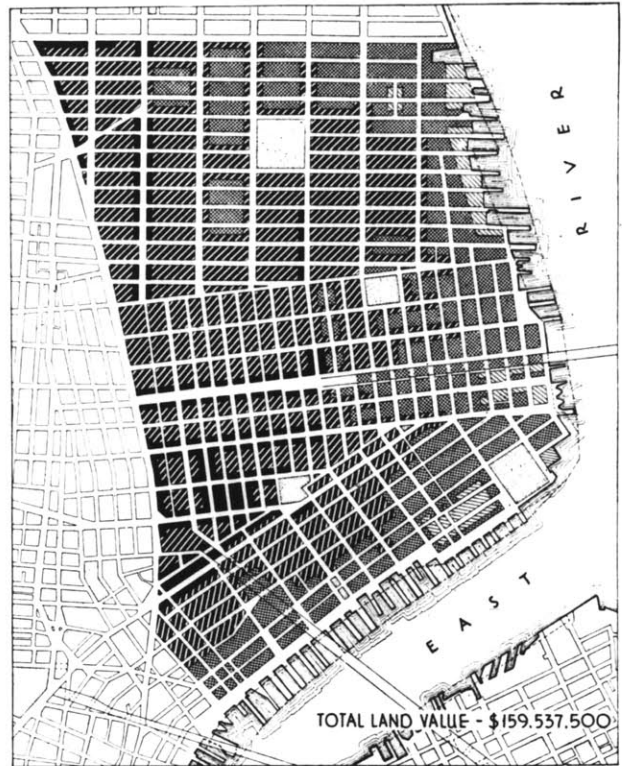
Land Valuation of the Lower East Side
(in thousands)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Taxable Land</u>	<u>Exempt Land</u>	<u>Total Land Valuation</u>
1904	\$153,062	\$22,324	\$175,387
1913	190,277	35,774	226,051
1919	148,091	35,759	183,851
1930	169,892	42,651	212,543
1940	111,637	41,241	152,878
1945	94,176	42,993	137,169
1947	101,935	44,731	146,666

During the last few decades there has been a continuous shift of land values from the peripheral areas of the Lower East Side into the central commercial areas. The maps prepared by the Lower East Side Planning Association indicate this shift only through 1932 but the indications are that this tendency was accelerated during the latter part of the 'thirties. ¹⁶ The map showing present

15. Ibid.

16. See Map XI: Shifting of Land Values.

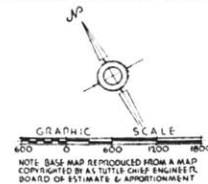


SHIFTING OF LAND VALUES 1909-1932 LOWER EAST SIDE NEW YORK CITY

LEGEND
VALUES IN DOLLARS PER FRONT
FOOT FOR LOTS 100 FT. DEEP

	\$ 101 TO \$ 200
	\$ 201 TO \$ 500
	\$ 501 TO \$ 1000
	\$ 1001 TO \$ 5000
	PARKS

NOTE DATA FROM "TENTATIVE LAND VALUE MAPS"
PREPARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF TAXES & ASSESSMENTS
TOTAL LAND VALUES ARE FOR AREA BETWEEN E 14TH ST.
FOURTH AVE - BOWERY-NEW BOWERY-JAMES ST-EAST RIVER



LOWER EAST SIDE PLANNING ASSOCIATION

BARTHOLOMEW & ASSOCIATES
CITY PLAN & LANDSCAPE ENGINEERS
SAINT LOUIS - MISSOURI

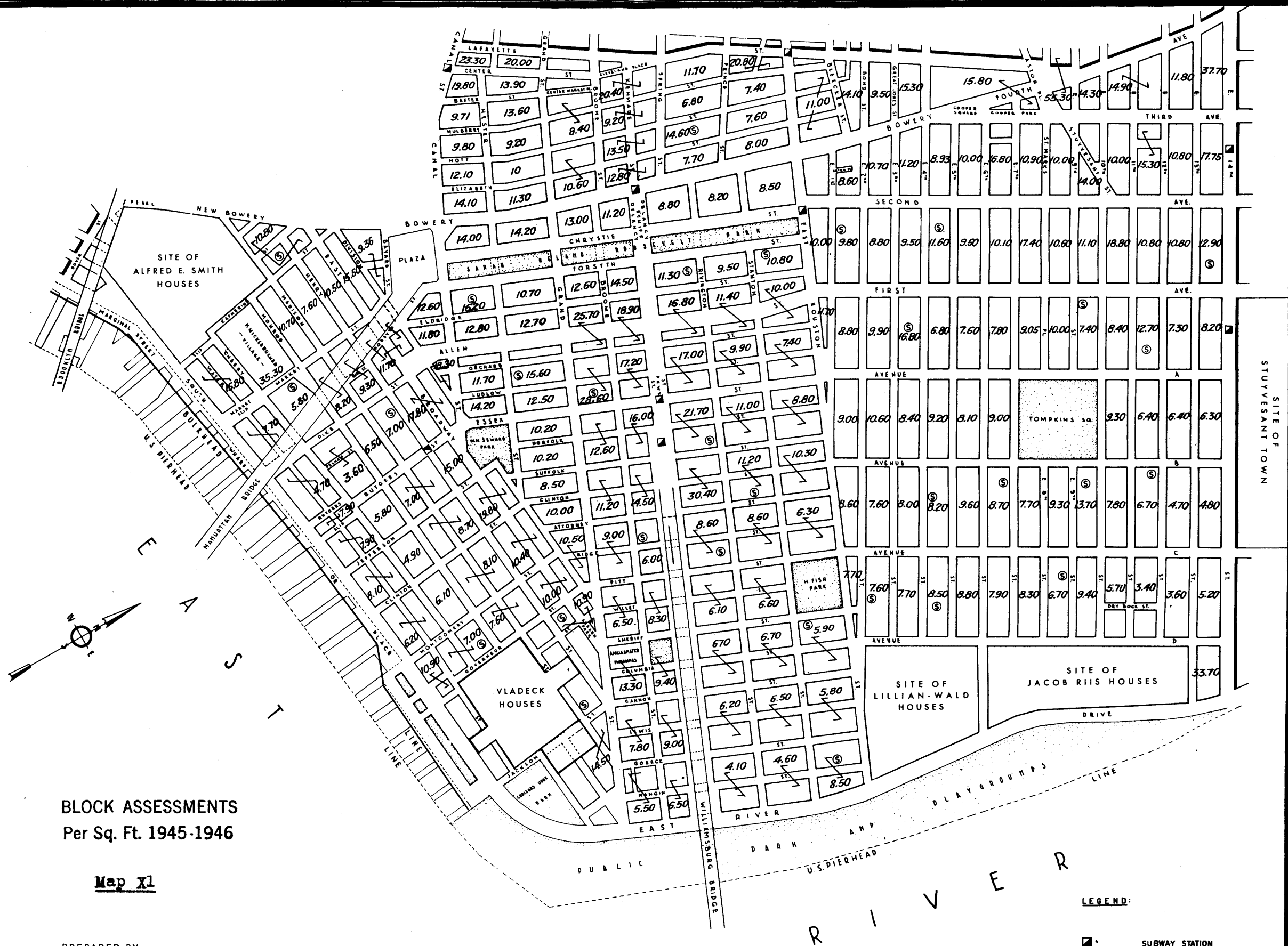
Map X

block assessments on a per square foot basis show the wide disparity that exists but does not show the even greater disparity between the frontages on the central commercial streets and the other streets of the Lower East Side.¹⁷

Today, with few exceptions, the greatest proportion of property value in the blocks in our study area is made up of land value. This tends to be proportionately greater along the more important commercial streets and diminishes in the more residential streets. This can be illustrated from the tax assessment records of values on some of these streets. In the block bound by the east side of Orchard, Broome, Ludlow and Grand Streets, the land value of the Orchard Street frontage makes up 59 per cent of the total land and building block valuation. On the block bound by Rivington, Allen, Orchard and Delancey Streets, the land values on the Delancey and Orchard Street frontages make up 66 per cent of the total taxable land and building valuations for the block (1947 Valuations).

The neighborhood in which the University Settlement House is located was chosen as a sample area to demonstrate the real estate conditions within our area. The blocks between Allen and Forsyth Streets are somewhat unusual in the sense that they lie in the main commercial

17. See Map XII: Block per square foot valuation.



BLOCK ASSESSMENTS
Per Sq. Ft. 1945-1946

Map X1

PREPARED BY:
JAMES FELT & CO., INC.
362 FIFTH AVENUE N.Y.C

- LEGEND:**
- SUBWAY STATION
 - PUBLIC PARK
 - Ⓢ PUBLIC SCHOOL

axis between Essex Street and the Bowery but have no developed commercial center of their own. That they are valued for commercial uses is evidenced by the recent construction of two new taxpayer types of buildings on vacant lots. However, the main land use is for residential purposes, with the block bound by Forsyth, Stanton, Eldridge, and Rivington Streets, the most heavily populated block in our entire area.

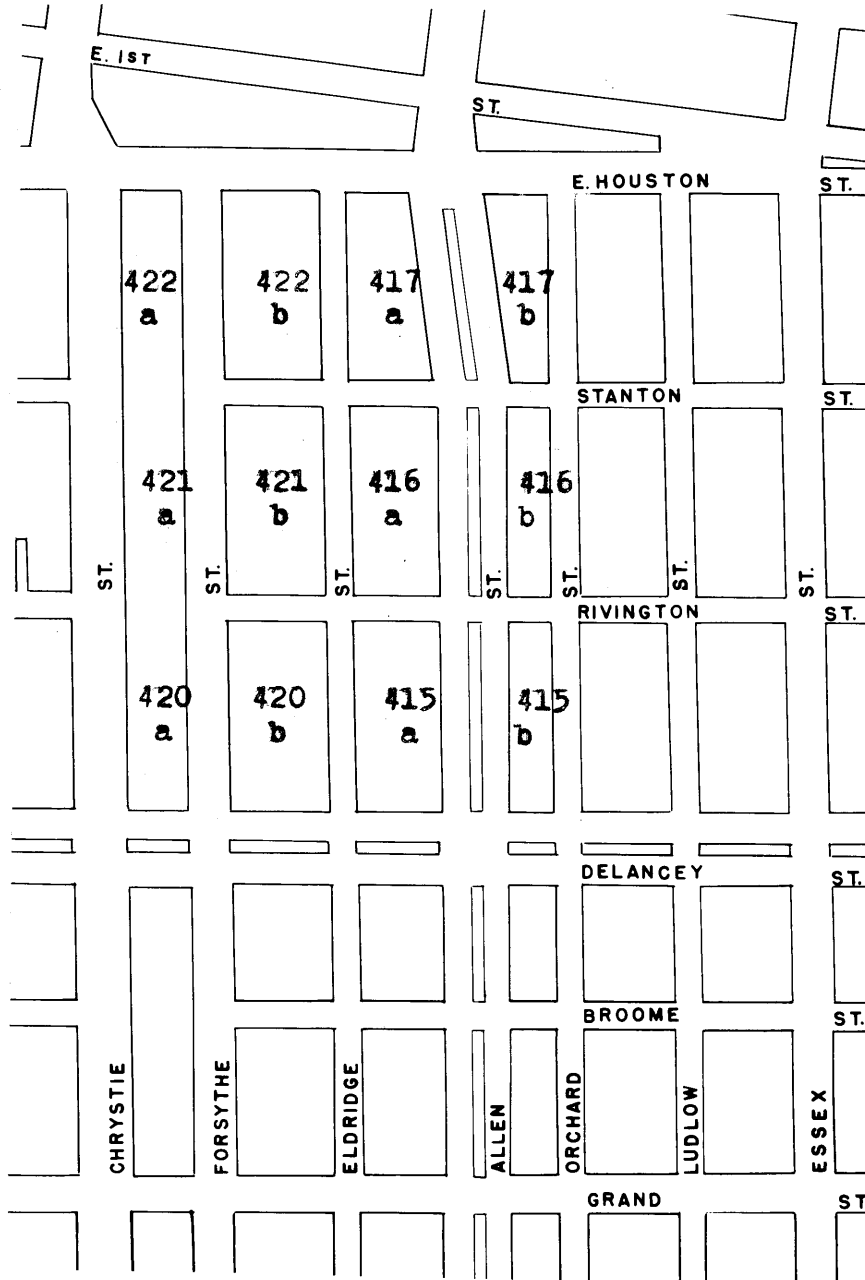
Table XV

Total Assessed Property Values by Blocks, 1920-1947
(in thousands of dollars)

<u>Blocks</u>	<u>1920</u>	<u>1930</u>	<u>1935</u>	<u>1947</u>	Per Cent <u>1947</u> <u>1920</u>
422	1,627	1,558*	1,096	904	55
421	1,760	1,728*	1,289	1,251	71
420	1,680	2,470*	1,488	1,664	99
417	1,586	1,737	1,332	1,180	74
416	1,699	1,791	1,444	1,349	79
415	1,509	2,203	1,607	1,841	120

* The tenements on the block between Chrystie and Forsyth Streets had been removed in the late 'twenties.

UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT SURVEY



Map X11: Block Numbers

Table XVI1947-1948 Taxable Property Assessed Valuations
(in thousands of dollars)

<u>Blocks</u>	<u>Land Values</u>	<u>Total Values</u>	<u>Structures</u>	<u>Per cent of Structures over Land Value</u>
422-b	389	539	150	42
421-b	463	831	369	80
420-b	514	701	187	36
417-a	390	601	211	54
417-b	418	579	161	38
416-a	383	662	279	73
416-b	444	649	205	46
415-a	584	750	167	28
415-b	613	783	172	28
Manhattan				87

The concentration of values about Delancey Street and Orchard Street is clearly indicated by Table XIV. Despite the fact that one-half block was removed in the Allen Street widening, block 415 has increased in value since 1920, in contrast to the general trends on the Lower East Side. Block 420 with a loss of all the structures on 420-A, has likewise remained high in value because of the greater concentration of values on the central area. Block 422, on the periphery of the area has had the greatest percentage loss in value, particularly during the last decade.

The strikingly low ratio of building values to land values is shown by Table XVI. Although land values are uniformly high in Manhattan, the total value of its structures was 87 per cent of the value of its land in

comparison to the low ratio of 28 per cent on the commercial blocks of our sample area. The only blocks where the ratio of structural values to land values are high are the middle blocks, 421-b and 416-a, both with a large residential population. This pattern is duplicated throughout our study area.

Tax Assessment Values

Tax assessment values have been used hitherto as synonymous with the real value of these properties. The fact is that these tax assessment figures are the only record that we have available for our use. However, most studies have shown that these values are greater than the market value as indicated by the sales price on parcels that changed ownership. Over-assessment in New York is based on the need of the city to raise more revenue while its tax limit is fixed by the state legislature. Within Manhattan the following changes in the proportion of market values to assessed values are reputed to have occurred:

Proportion of Total Consideration to Total Assessed Values.*¹⁹

<u>Year</u>	<u>Proportion Sales to Assessed Value</u>
1935	86.6
1936	79.0
1937	82.9
1938	79.5
1939	75.5
1940	72.6

19. Armstrong, R.H. and Hoyt, H., "Decentralization in New York City", The Urban Land Institute, Chicago, 1941, p. 181.

This gap between market value and assessed value cannot be considered as a fixed percentage when applied to any individual block or property. In a study done in 1945 of property conditions on the Lower East Side, it was found that considerable variations existed between the estimates of experienced realtors in this district and those of the tax assessor. On most of the properties appraised, the market value was about 20 or 25 per cent²⁰ lower than the assessed values.

Summary of property conditions

The ownership of property in our area has been widely scattered in the hands of owners with very limited capital resources. Since, until the present housing emergency, the old law tenements had become largely unprofitable except where thoroughly renovated, many of these owners had to bear losses for many years and were finally forced into foreclosures. Only those owning properties in the commercial centers have been able to withstand losses and see their properties increase in value during these years despite the fact that the buildings themselves have deteriorated. The land values in these central areas have been steadily increasing in proportion to the surrounding values. There are cases where the land value on one side

20. The James Felt Company, op.cit.

of a block is more than 50 per cent of the entire land and building value of the entire block. Since very little building has been done anywhere in the area during the last thirty years, the present structural values on high priced land are most frequently only one-third to one-half that of the land.

PART VI

Recommendations and Program

Trends and Possibilities in the Present Development

Before entering into any proposals, a brief summary of what developments may be expected to take place in the area in the future on the basis of present trends seems pertinent.

The commercial activities within this area are largely stabilised. The most active expansion has come only recently since the post-war prosperity created a shortage of space in other parts of Manhattan. However, since this area is advantageously situated to act as a distributing center, there has been some new construction of light warehouse taxpayer units. More such units may be expected in the future on vacant sites that are available or become available. This development may be expected to confine itself to the blocks west of Clinton Street, since further east the advantage of access to the main north-south routes becomes lost.

It is highly improbable that residential construction of any extent will take place under the present conditions. Even if the land costs fell drastically, the area has too bad a reputation and too shabby an environment for a developer to risk his capital. It can be expected that

the neighborhood will become even less attractive than it is now since there are no strict controls on uses and more that are undesirable amidst residential neighborhoods must inevitably be attracted to the low cost space that will become available as vacancies increase.

The businessmen now in the area have shown a willingness at times, to improve their buildings and expand their quarters. It would be completely unrealistic to assume their willingness to undertake any large-scale changes. The larger wholesalers, particularly those who own their own buildings, are paying rentals that are sometimes relatively low for the amount of space that they command. The smaller wholesalers in some of the centers require very little space for their highly specialized line of goods. Others, though their present space is very inadequate, do not have the capital resources to venture on a construction program. The retailers have too much at stake in their present locations to risk making any changes that would affect the present pattern.

Developments Planned or Proposed by the City

The following proposals have either been approved or are being studied more thoroughly at the present time and may be expected to be passed upon in the future.

Houston Street is to be widened to the East River Drive at a proposed cost of \$2,921,700.¹

1. The City Planning Commission, Proposed 1946 Capital Budget and 1947-1951 Capital Program, October 1945, p.37.

An overpass is to be built at the intersection of Houston Street and the East River Drive at an estimated cost of \$1,202,000.²

There is to be a trucking route extension of 1st Avenue through Allen Street by widening Pike Street to the East River.³

The street car tracks are to be removed from the Williamsburg Bridge and the roadway is to be reconstructed for vehicular traffic and the approaching plaza and approaches are to be renovated this year. Serial bonds and capital notes totalling \$1,740,000 have been authorized by the Board of Estimates.⁴

The widening of the southern part of Delancey Street from the Williamsburg Bridge Plaza to the East River Drive has been proposed.⁵

The Lower Manhattan Crosstown Expressway, merely an idea in the past, has now been carefully planned and considered, and is estimated to cost about \$23,960,000.⁶ It is likely that the city will take actions on it within the next decade. It will facilitate the flow of traffic from the west side to the Manhattan and Williamsburg

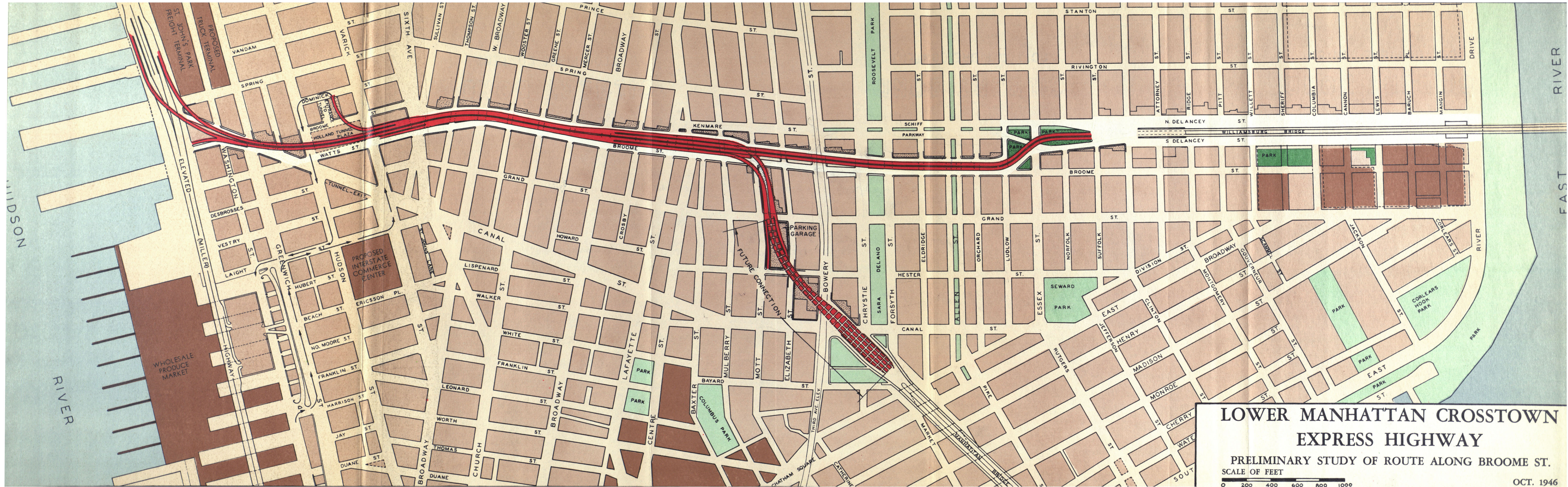
2. Ibid.

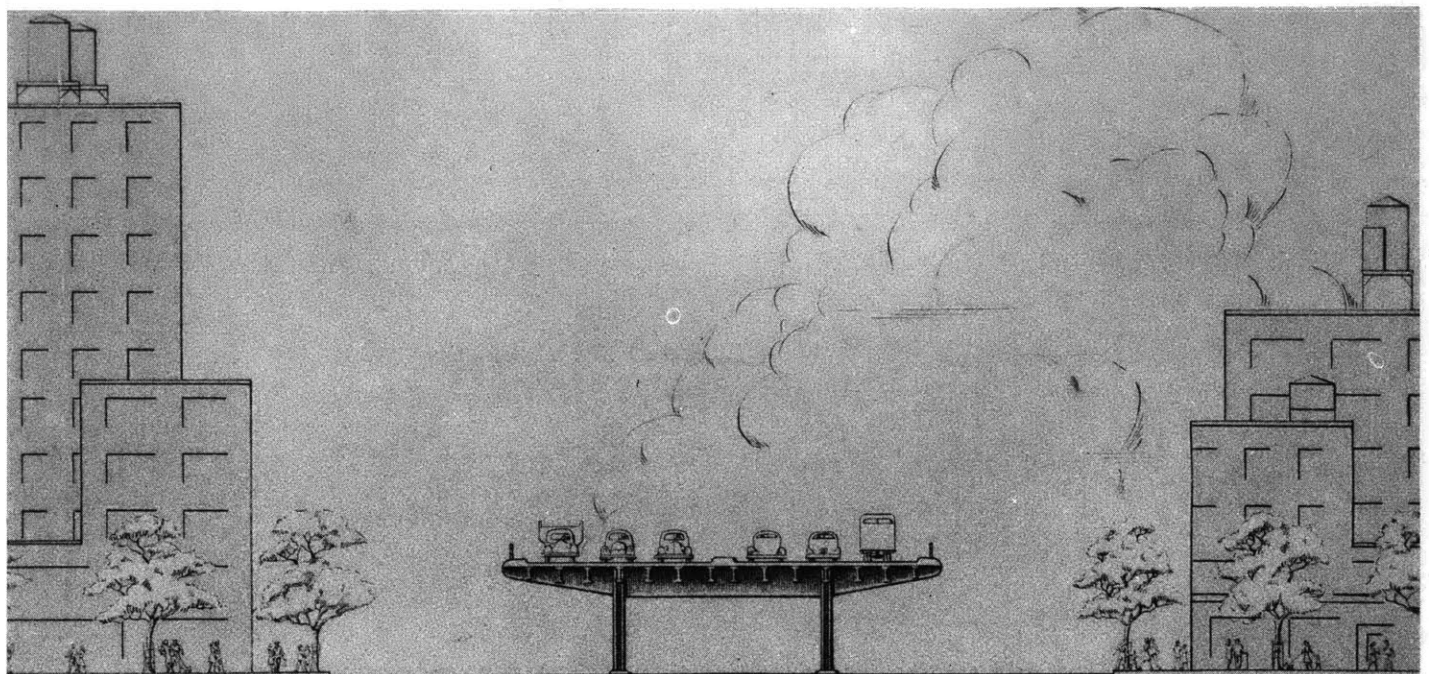
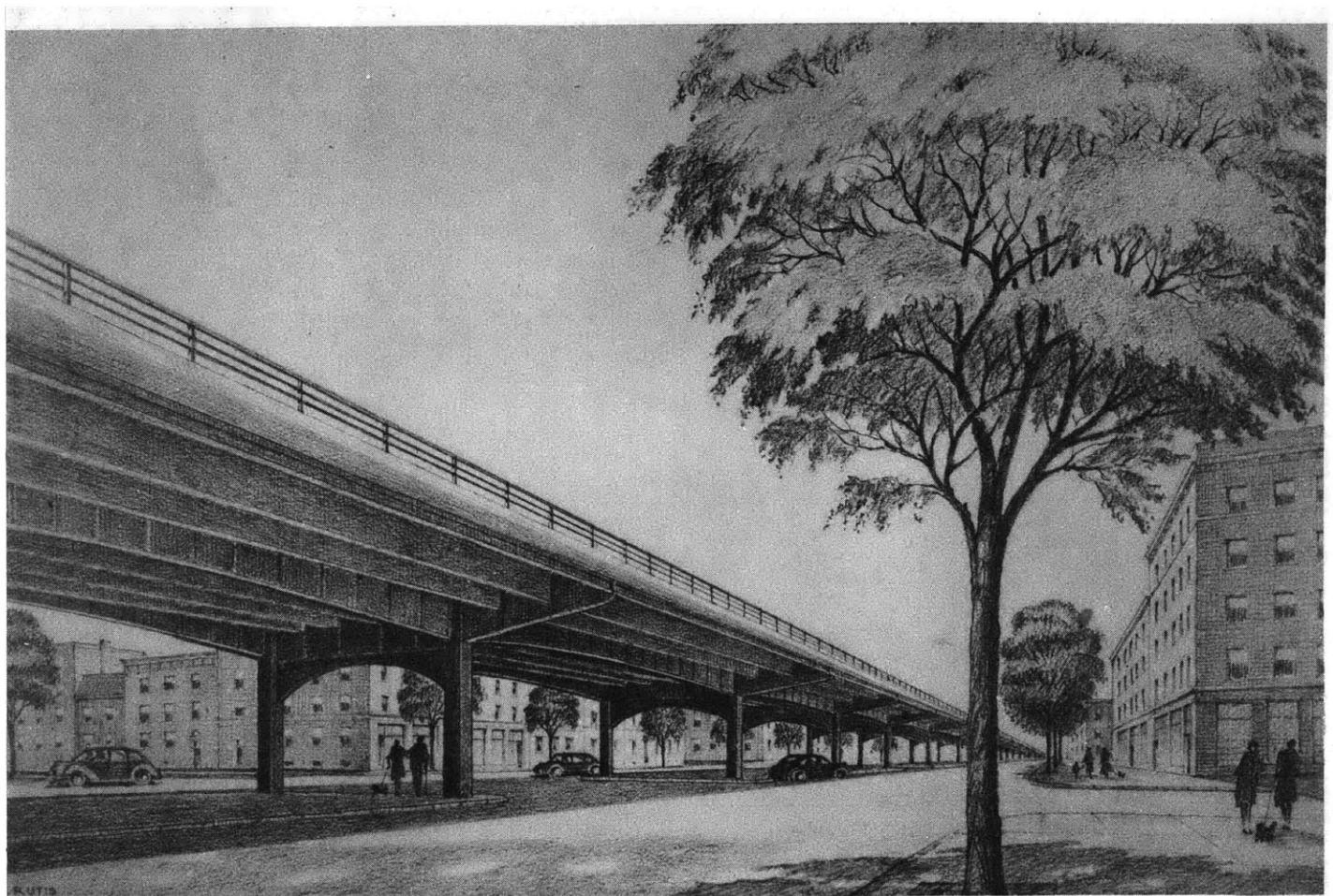
3. Ibid.

4. New York Times, August 27, 1948.

5. Proposed Lower Manhattan Crosstown Expressway, Office of the President of the Borough of Manhattan, 1946, p. 7.

6. New York Times, June 26, 1948.





**PERSPECTIVE VIEW AND TYPICAL SECTION OF
SIX LANE ELEVATED HIGHWAY**

Bridges. The present route by way of Canal Street becomes so choked with traffic that it is one of the most serious bottlenecks in the city. It should also have the effect of easing some of the traffic that flows on Delancey Street particularly during the rush hours. Concurrent with the expressway it has been proposed that Broome Street be widened to 150 feet until the Williamsburg Bridge.⁷

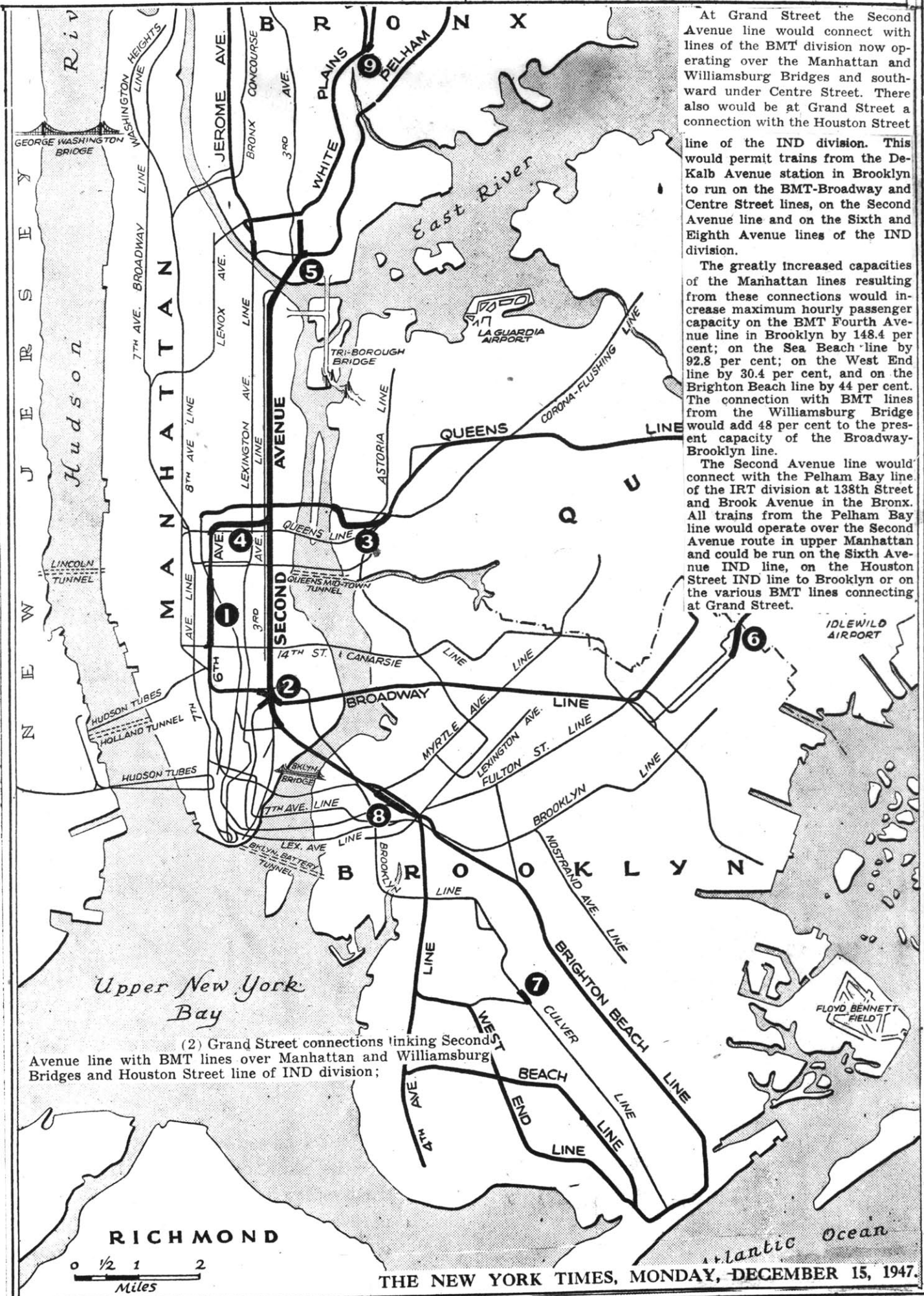
A new six-track subway along 2nd Avenue has been carefully planned by the city.⁸ It is to start at Grand Street where it will connect the B.M.T. lines from the Manhattan Bridge with the line from the Williamsburg Bridge and have ties with the Houston Street Independent Line. Now that the subway fare has been raised the city is better able to go ahead with this scheme. It is expected to increase very substantially the number of trains that it will be possible to run from Brooklyn and there can be little doubt that the 2nd Avenue line will become very important in the future.

It is expected that the 3rd Avenue-Bowery El will be torn down when the 2nd Avenue subway becomes available to replace it. The two developments combined with the development of the U. N. site and the new housing projects that have been erected on the long-neglected

7. See Map XIII. Proposed Crosstown Expressway.

8. New York Times, December 17, 1947. See Map No. XIV.

PROPOSED SECOND AVENUE SUBWAY AND CONNECTIONS WITH EXISTING LINES



At Grand Street the Second Avenue line would connect with lines of the BMT division now operating over the Manhattan and Williamsburg Bridges and southward under Centre Street. There also would be at Grand Street a connection with the Houston Street

line of the IND division. This would permit trains from the DeKalb Avenue station in Brooklyn to run on the BMT-Broadway and Centre Street lines, on the Second Avenue line and on the Sixth and Eighth Avenue lines of the IND division.

The greatly increased capacities of the Manhattan lines resulting from these connections would increase maximum hourly passenger capacity on the BMT Fourth Avenue line in Brooklyn by 148.4 per cent; on the Sea Beach line by 92.8 per cent; on the West End line by 30.4 per cent, and on the Brighton Beach line by 44 per cent. The connection with BMT lines from the Williamsburg Bridge would add 48 per cent to the present capacity of the Broadway-Brooklyn line.

The Second Avenue line would connect with the Pelham Bay line of the IRT division at 138th Street and Brook Avenue in the Bronx. All trains from the Pelham Bay line would operate over the Second Avenue route in upper Manhattan and could be run on the Sixth Avenue IND line, on the Houston Street IND line to Brooklyn or on the various BMT lines connecting at Grand Street.

(2) Grand Street connections linking Second Avenue line with BMT lines over Manhattan and Williamsburg Bridges and Houston Street line of IND division;

THE NEW YORK TIMES, MONDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1947.

east side of Manhattan may produce a new alignment of traffic patterns and future expansion in the city.

Effects of the Proposed Improvements

The patterns of land use within Manhattan are far too well established and set by its concentrated developments for any radical changes to emerge from any of the above proposed improvements. However, within our area, its present advantages of location for light trucking distributing and easy accessibility will be emphasized. The new convenient access to the Brooklyn population on the main B. M. T. lines may contribute a substantial increase to the present patrons of the area's shopping centers and it will almost inevitably increase its already prosperous restaurant trade specializing in Roumanian, Russian, and Jewish fare.

Proposed Land Use Plan - Development

Our land use plan will be based on past developments, present trends and future needs, both of the area and the city.

Today this area has only one-third of its former population, and its decline is likely to continue in the future. In its stead, the main support of property values in considerable portions of the area stems from business uses. This has been made possible in part by the concentration within this area of the business activity formerly diffused over the entire Lower East Side. Its effect has been to keep the values within this area high and even higher along the northern side of Delancey Street than they were in 1920, while values have tumbled in the peripheral areas of the Lower East Side.⁹ However, where the greater proportion of rental income is derived from business uses, the tendency has been for the residential developments to deteriorate. This has become most striking in the few blocks about Canal Street and Allen Street, where the population has dwindled to an inconsequential number of households on some blocks.¹⁰

9. See Map X. Shifting of Land Values.
 10. See Map III. Population per block.

In an effort to get a basis for the comparison of the dominance of the commercial and residential uses, a series of maps have been prepared by which these areas may become delineated. We have arbitrarily taken a rental of twenty dollars a month rent as our dividing line and grouped our areas accordingly in Map 17. No assumptions are being made as to the adequacy or inadequacy of dwelling units in either category but we are assuming that rentals do indicate a difference in desirability. Since the units themselves are of different orders of age and plumbing adequacy, maps indicating age and per cent with private baths have been placed for ready comparison.¹¹ It will be seen that although there is a close correspondence between rentals and housing conditions in a number of cases, in others there is no such correspondence, and the neighborhood influences become uppermost.

Even where there is a close correspondence between housing conditions and rentals, there exists a relationship, at times, with the neighborhood location. In the block bound by Clinton, Grand, Attorney, and Division Streets, in the area of more "favorable" location all the tenements

11. See Map XV, Dwelling Units Built before 1900, and Map XVI, Dwelling Units without Private Baths.

UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT SURVEY



UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT SURVEY



are "old-law" yet, according to the census data, only 34 per cent of those reporting plumbing conditions were without private baths. In the block bound by Eldridge, Hester, Allen and Canal Streets, in a business area, none of the housing is "old-law" and yet 74 per cent were reported without private baths.

Neighborhood patterns

On the basis of the rental classification we have made an overlap of neighborhood units that they seem to approximate and have given them numbers for identification and discussion.¹² Division Street has been left out of our discussion because the rentals on the block reflect the values on East Broadway, and bear little relationship to the adjoining neighborhoods.

Discussion of Neighborhood Units

Neighborhood 10 is the University Settlement district. It is a declining residential area with several recent business infringements but no business concentration or center. Its housing character has already been discussed.¹³

Neighborhood 20 has about 40 per cent new law housing and the business uses are not dominant except on

12. See Overlay on Map XVII, of Neighborhood Units.

13. See Map IX, Housing Conditions.

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SCALE 0 250' 500' 750' 1000'

**AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT
PER APARTMENT**

UNDER \$ 20.50

OVER \$ 20.50

SOURCE: 1940 CENSUS

I CANDEUB M.I.T. SUMMER 1948

Grand Street. This part of the southern side of Delancey Street is not an active center and the staid old wool cloth wholesalers centered here are not a disagreeable business use. This was at one time considered a favorable location on the Lower East Side and retains on the corner of Delancey and Forsyth Streets, one of the most prominent synagogues of the area.

Neighborhood 30 is by any estimate the worst in the area and probably, on the basis of rentals, one of the worst in the city. Its predominate use is for business activities.

Neighborhood 40 is an enigma. Orchard Street, one of the most active shopping centers in the area contains some relatively "good" housing on its western side, and this has the advantage of Allen Street with light and air, instead of a narrow court to the rear. The result is that the rentals are high enough to put them into the over-twenty dollar classification.

Neighborhood 50 exhibits the same characteristics as the previous one with business uses dominant.

Neighborhood 60 was suffering from the effects of blight rather than business during the 1940 census with several boarded tenements near Houston Street. Some of these were bought by the New York Housing Authority and renovated for the use of former residents of the sites

that were cleared for the new Housing projects. Norfolk Street remains a predominately residential street and although the retail trade of streets such as Stanton and Rivington Streets, may be considered an infringement on residential uses, in reality except where a heavy "outside" traffic is produced, retail activities tend to become almost characteristic of the residential areas and do not exclude residential uses to the same degree that wholesale uses do. Baby carriages can be parked in front of groceries and candy stores but not in front of a wholesale hardware supply house.

Neighborhood 70 is well situated for residential uses in its location north of Seward Park but it contains the shabbiest looking buildings in the area. The block of Suffolk Street between Grand and Division Streets is the food market of the area with stands selling fish and produce of every sort on the sidewalks and pushcarts in the street when the policeman on the beat turns his back. There is a clothes hanger manufacturer located on the eastern side of Norfolk Street, who occupies two converted tenements and a new two-story commercial building with off-street loading facilities.

Neighborhood 80. This section contains the Clinton Street shopping center, but as was previously stated, this type of activity has less of an effect on

residential uses than the activities of the wholesale centers. This area gives the appearance of a residential center despite a considerable degree of blight. The block bound by Attorney, Houston, Ridge and Station contains a high percentage of boarded buildings and vacant lots and includes as a business use on Stanton Street a garage with a 50-foot frontage that is used as a parking place for trucks. Ridge Street between Stanton and Rivington Street contains a large dry cleaning plant that frequently has a number of trucks parked outside its doors or backed up on the sidewalk. This firm recently added a taxpayer unit despite the fact that dry cleaning establishments are specifically prohibited in areas zoned for business use.

Neighborhood 90 is affected by two sources of blight. The blocks fronting on Pitt Street face one of the most deteriorated areas of the Lower East Side, with a large number of boarded houses. The blocks north of the bridge seem to be strongly affected by their proximity to the bridge and its traffic.

Neighborhood 100 is probably the most dominantly residential section of our area. The commercial activity of Delancey Street centers about some big restaurants and some miscellaneous retail shops. There is a cluster of 11 Hebrew bookshops and dealers in religious articles along

Clinton Street Below Delancey St.



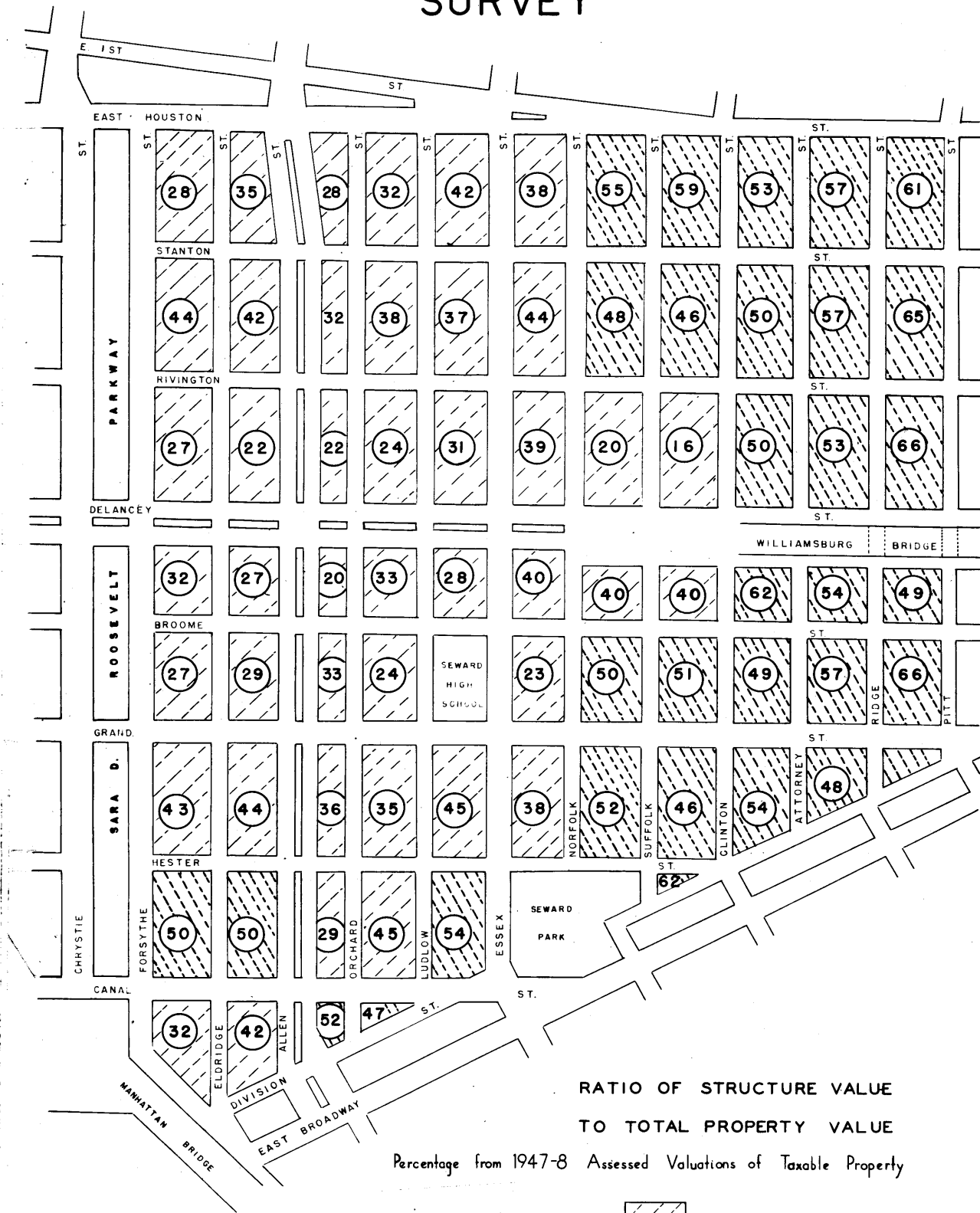
Norwalk Street. Grand Street is predominantly retail in this part except for the yarn center, and contains a variety of different shops catering to the local population. Division Street is dominated by the old clothes storage business.

Land Values

One indication of which properties are valued for their business location is the land values that are placed on them by the tax assessors. We have previously noted the fact that where commercial uses were dominant the percentage of structural value to land value was low. By securing the ratio of structural values to total values of all the taxable properties in our area we are able to see the application of this generalization to the area as a whole. By arbitrarily choosing the ratio of 45 per cent we have been able to divide the area into a very definite pattern.¹⁴ The only two blocks that fall outside this pattern are those on Canal Street where the development has been relatively intensive and which contains some of the largest loft structures in the area.

14. See Map XVIII: Ratio of Structure Value to Total Value.

UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT SURVEY

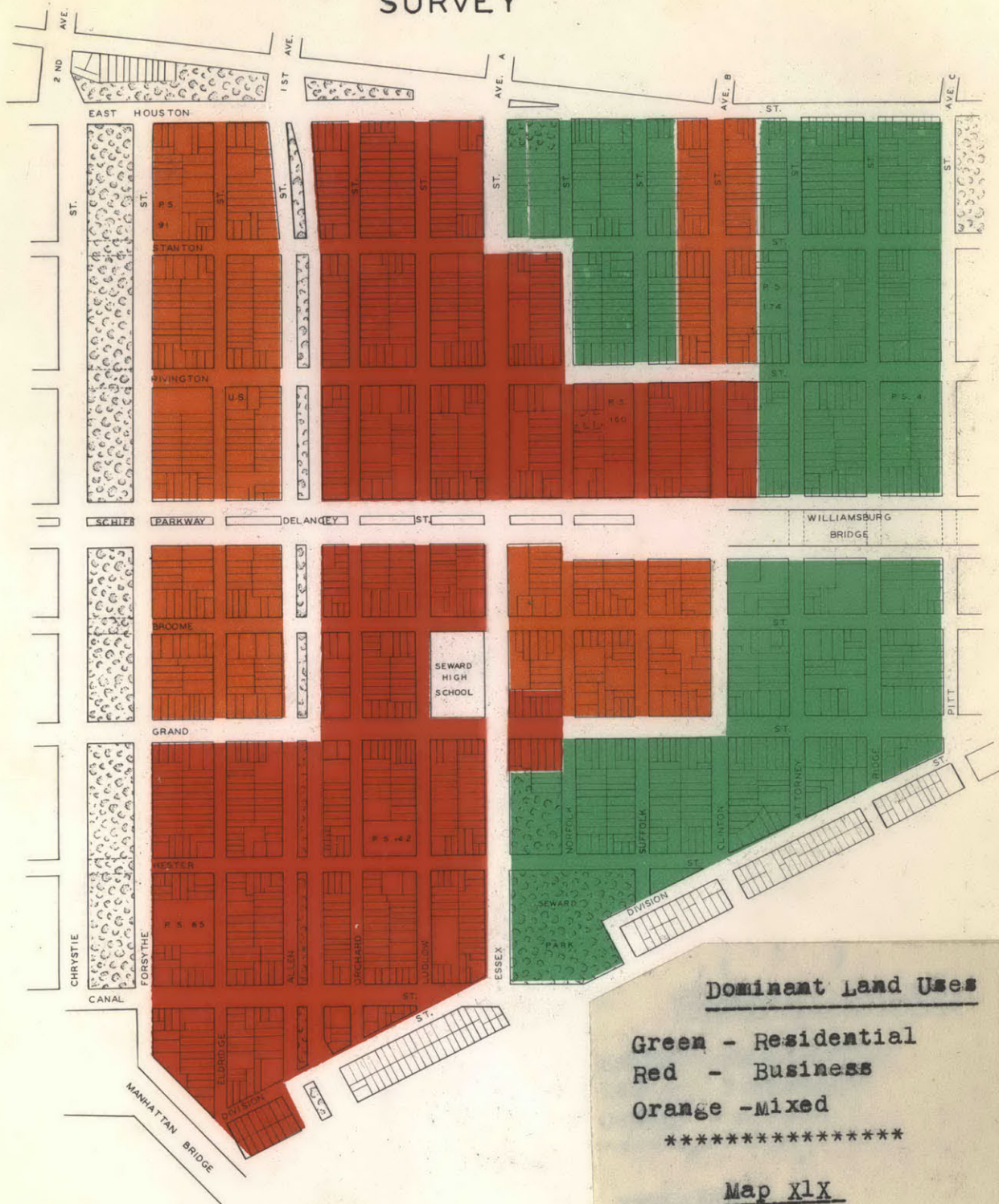


Creating a land use pattern

On the basis of the previous information and the above mentioned maps, another map was prepared to differentiate the dominantly residential sections from the commercial.¹⁵ Dominance is here used as a descriptive category to indicate the more important source of property values, the more exclusive occupant of the streets and sidewalks, and the use most likely to control future development. This map is the basic map upon which recommendations will be made for a controlling land use pattern for the future.

15. See Map XIX: Dominant Land Uses.

UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT SURVEY



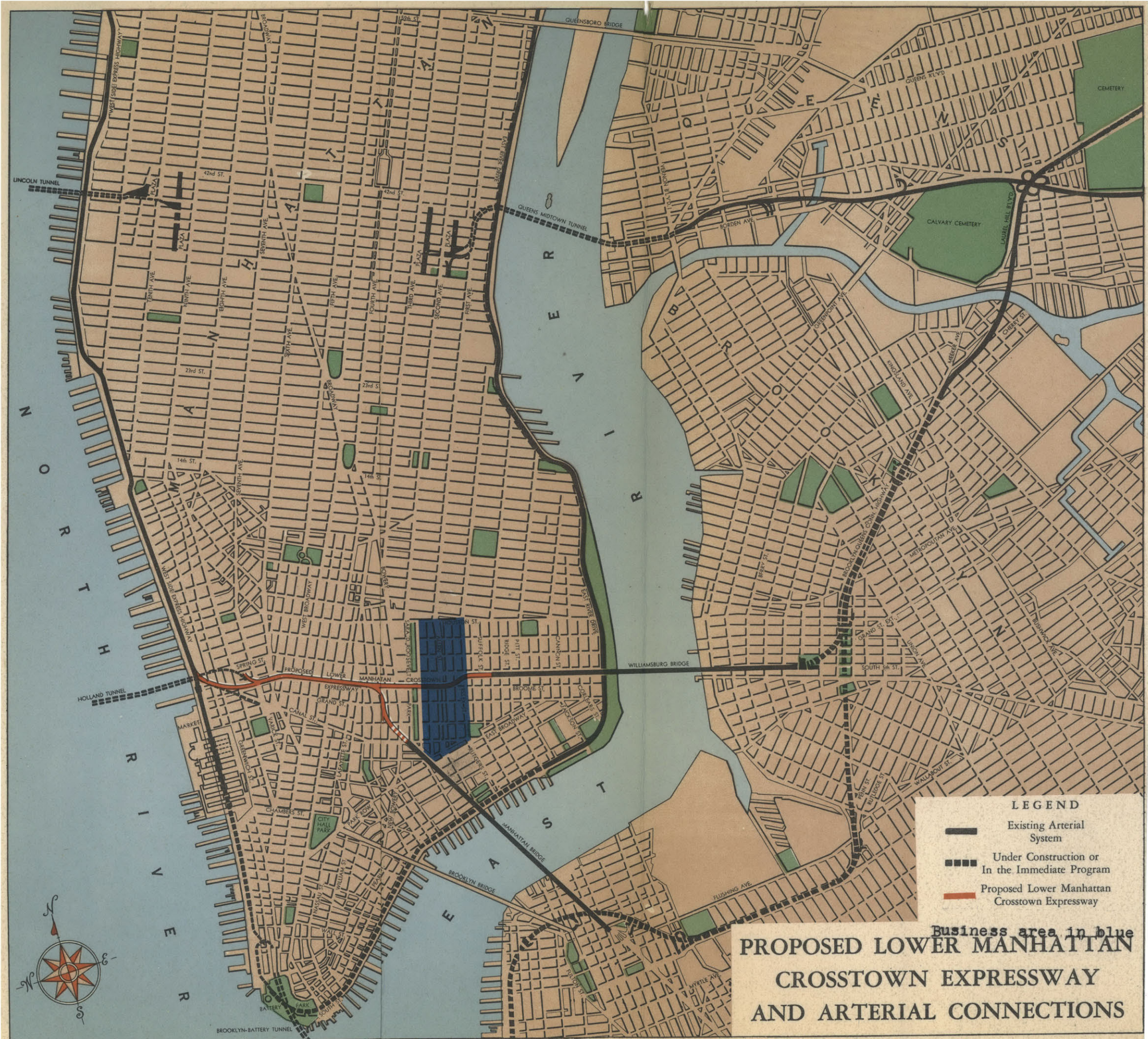
Proposed Master Plan

The present existence of any land use is not a sufficient reason for retaining that use in the future. A long range policy must be founded on the city's needs and on the fullest realization of the possibilities for development inherent in any location on the basis of those needs.

Business Area Proposed

If we limit our discussion for the moment to the area between Essex and Forsyth Streets, we note that its present uses have been established for a long period, that they seem to serve the Lower East Side and the city in a specialized capacity by virtue of their location. This location might be described as central to the Lower East Side region, and highly accessible to the main traffic routes and transit lines of New York, without being in itself a central location within the city.¹⁶ These advantages have increased during the last two decades and will probably be further increased in the near future. At the same time its advantages as a residential center when New York City was little developed has been decreased as new transportation routes widened the availability of

16. See Map XX: Location of Business Area.



Business area in blue

PROPOSED LOWER MANHATTAN CROSSTOWN EXPRESSWAY AND ARTERIAL CONNECTIONS

suitable residential sites. Today residential uses have in some parts become remnants and survivals that exist only by virtue of the availability of old dwelling units. On the block at Grand Street and Allen Street (see Map XVII) where rentals average \$13 a month, it is inconceivable that these could produce an economic return to their owners. The proof is that along such streets as Orchard, the owners have in many cases preferred to board-up the upper stories of their tenements rather than improve them to conform to the multiple dwelling laws. For these reasons it is recommended that those areas where business uses are dominant west of Essex Street should be continued as such.

There are two areas on Map XIX, west of Essex Street, that are indicated as mixed areas. If the area surrounding them is to be developed for business uses they will remain small residential islands cut off from participation in a larger community and it will be necessary to retain the existing elementary school for their use. This is not considered desirable. Since the factor of accessibility that was emphasized above in discussing the existing dominant business areas applies equally well to these two sections it is recommended that they be included in the business district.

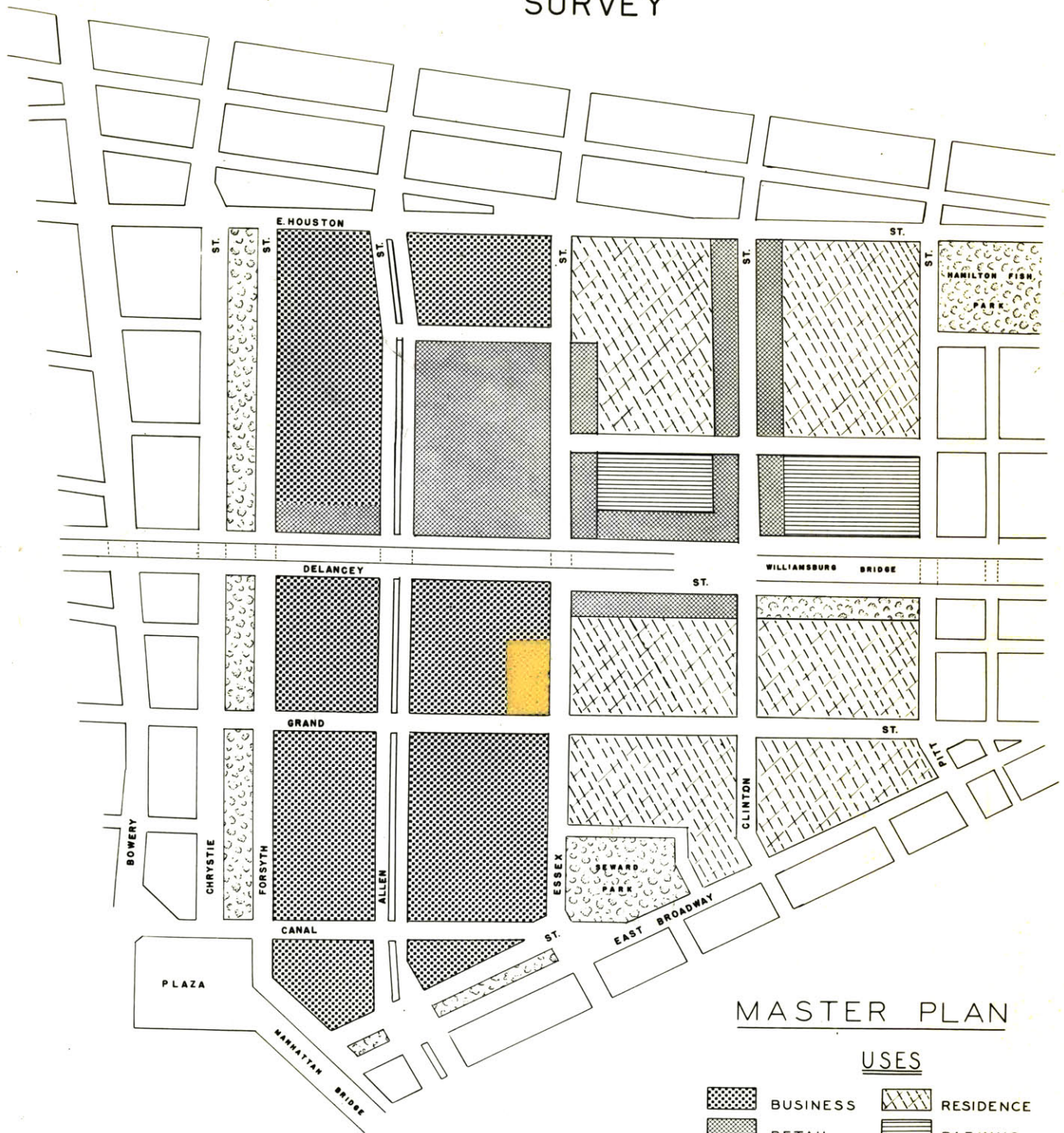
Residential areas

We cannot assume a virtually unlimited expansion of the business uses in our area. On the basis of present developments, their concentration has been west of Essex Street with only a scattering of uses other than retail, in the rest of the area. On this basis we recommend that the section west of Essex Street be developed for residential uses and some retail uses. There is a supplementary reason for removing the present business developments about Grand and Essex Streets and making it residential. The city has a large investment in the Seward Park High School, which is somewhat unfortunately placed but should have residential neighborhoods close by.

The entire Lower East Side is favorably placed as a residential area for the workers in the financial district of Lower Manhattan and the employees in the municipal center.¹⁷ The section of our area recommended for intensive residential development is ideally suited close to transportation routes, to shopping facilities and to two fine parks close by and the larger East River Park within easy walking distance. If business uses are rigorously excluded its present values should go into a decline as vacancy rates in the city return to a more normal level.

17. See Hoyt, H. and Badgley, L.D., The Housing Demand of Workers in Manhattan, Corlears Hook Group, New York, N.Y., 1939.

UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT SURVEY



Meanwhile health laws should be enforced and owners compelled to remove boarded structures that are dilapidated beyond hope of repair and vacant lots should be kept clean for the protection of those people living in the area.

Retail Uses

There has been little change made in the location of retail centers. If the Grand Street Station has an exit on the northern side of Delancey and Forsyth Streets, then it may extend the present retail area. Orchard Street is a well known street in New York and both its name and character should be retained. But it should be a pedestrian way and developed as a combination of stores and stands on a freer scale with an esplanade, benches, and other amenities. The present Essex Street Market has an unfortunately narrow site and though modern in every respect is much too crowded. New York should have at least one such market and Orchard Street by tradition and by its central location is probably the best site that could be chosen. If properly developed it should become a noteworthy attraction in the city. Essex Street and Clinton Street should remain retail centers. Clinton Street is almost in the exact center of the Lower East Side and should retain its hold as a shopping center. The southern side of Delancey Street should continue as a restaurant center.

No local retail centers have been indicated because it is felt that they are a community service and should be planned as part of the architectural development of the residential areas.

Parks

Seward Park, whose present facilities are being intensively used should be expanded. The Sara D. Roosevelt Park should be redeveloped to offer a combination of walks and plazas with fewer large playfields. If the Grand Street station becomes an active terminal this park may be used as intensively as the one at Union Square. At present it serves as a recreation area for the employees in the surrounding business districts who come here during their noon hours and who frequently organize ball teams for short mid-afternoon games. These uses may be expected to continue. The Bowery nuisance in this park can only be abated by a large-scale rehabilitation program for these men, which does not lie within the scope of this report.

It is proposed that all new residential neighborhoods be built as garden apartments with their own interior parks.

Proposed Street System

The small north-south streets are to be eliminated except where it may be desirable to retain parts for interior circulation.

Clinton Street is to be widened to 80 feet. However, no traffic is to be allowed to cross the bridge plaza. None is allowed across now except the 14th Street crosstown bus. This is to go by way of East Broadway to Pitt Street where it will turn north. It will turn into the northern side of Delancey Street until Clinton Street where it will resume its northward course.

Pitt Street is to be widened to 80 feet and made a through street.

Division Street below Seward Park should be eliminated and East Broadway, which is very congested at this point, should be made into a boulevard and connect with the newly proposed widening of Park Row as part of the Civic Center approach.¹⁸ The present connections to the Manhattan Bridge by way of Forsyth Street through Division Street is a traffic bottleneck.

The Crosstown Expressway should run along Kenmare Street and onto the Schiff Parkway from Lafayette Street.

18. "Plans for the Development of Manhattan Civic Center", New York Times, June 25, 1948.

Carrying Out the Program

New York City now has programs for two large areas, the Manhattan Civic Center and the Brooklyn Civic Center. In both cases there exists a definite plan and the recognition that the plan will be carried out by the cooperation of the Highway Department, the Park Department, the Housing Authority, the zoning board and by the use of redevelopment powers granted by the state.¹⁹ This same approach should be taken to the redevelopment of this area and an agency should be set up to carry the program through on a schedule and to make the necessary financial arrangements.

It is not proposed that this program be carried through at one time or by one single method of redevelopment. It is suggested that the commercial areas be redeveloped first. Their housing quarters are the worst and their present residents should be given priority in public housing projects. By developing, in a series of stages, an entirely modern business area with adequate underground or garage parking space, with off-street loading facilities, with proper storage space and concentrated market areas, the present residential neighborhoods would be greatly benefited and the business uses within

19. New York Times, June 25, 1948.

them could be encouraged to move to the new centers. By instituting strict controls over uses in these sections, some of their present sub-standard environmental conditions could be alleviated and although their housing is relatively poor the living conditions of these people could be protected until such time as the area is redeveloped for housing projects.

The purchase and clearance of property in the business district may be accomplished by three methods. The city could encourage a private redevelopment corporation to pay for and clear the land under the Redevelopment Companies' Law of 1942, whereby it would be granted a subsidy in the form of a partial tax exemption for a period of years. It could purchase and clear the land itself pursuant to the state law authorizing municipalities to acquire land for the clearance and replanning of substandard areas, and then dispose of the land for private redevelopment, absorbing a partial loss.²⁰ A third method would be to acquire the land and then lease it for private redevelopment.

Since the city's finances are limited it would be unrealistic to omit the importance of the cost factor in carrying through a program of the scope outlined here. Any

20. New York State Laws of 1945, Chapter 887.

of the above methods will prove very expensive. For the city to subsidize commercial structures during the present housing crisis would be socially undesirable and politically unwise. It is therefore suggested that^a/different approach be used for treating areas of this type. The city should establish an area redevelopment authority empowered to issue its own bonds based on the value of the land it purchases. This corporation should purchase the land to be redeveloped and then lease it for private development or do its own construction in accordance with the master plan. The city would incur expenses only if this agency has any losses. However, since it will use the land more intensively than it is being used at present and since it can take full advantage of all projected city improvements, this agency should not suffer any considerable losses on a long-term basis. In the meantime its developed properties should be fully taxable and should contribute more to the city in taxes than the previous developments.

Justifications for the Program

A program with the dimensions of the one outlined must have a well-defined public purpose in order for the city to foster it. There are many general considerations that have been frequently raised to support a policy of

redevelopment, but we will limit ourselves to three specific reasons for the redevelopment of this area.

Social reasons

Almost all of the Lower East Side has been marked by the City Planning Commission as an area for "clearance,²¹ replanning and low-rent housing. Vladeck Houses already provide 1,531 apartments. A total of 6,493 more are in various stages of construction in the Wald, Riis, and²² Smith projects. Two other projects, Madison Houses and Tompkins Square Houses were contemplated until recently when they were shelved because of the difficulty and ex-²³pense of relocating persons. It seems likely that this work will be continued in the future. On the basis of lower land costs, the extent of blight as evidenced by boarded tenements and vacant land, and sub-standard housing as evidenced by low rentals, it may be expected that the remaining waterfront area will be redeveloped ^{well as} ~~as~~ large sections north of Houston Street. But as clearance continues towards the central areas they will run into prohibitively high costs and strong commercial interests. There will be

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- 21. Master Plan, City Planning Commission, December 1942.
 - 22. Project Statistics, New York Housing Authority, July 1947.
 - 23. Interview with Mr. Golding, Information Dept., New York Housing Authority, July 15, 1948.

difficulties in any program of slum clearance limited to a re-housing program.

Within the Lower East Side the land costs for²⁴ public housing projects have been as follows:

	<u>Vladeck</u>	<u>Riis</u>	<u>Wald</u>
Cost per square foot of private property	\$4.37	\$4.57	\$6.37
Land cost per Apartment	\$1,320	\$1,750	\$2,100
Density of population per acre	389	379	423

The highest price paid for land by the New York Housing Authority was for the Stephen Foster Project at 115th Street and Fifth Avenue at \$8.16 per square foot. At a density of 369 persons per acre the cost of land per²⁵ apartment is \$3,300. Even at that price, nowhere in the area from Attorney Street to Forsyth Street is it possible to assemble a large parcel of land with an assessed value at that level.

This condition creates the possibility and likelihood that unless the housing authority disregards costs completely, most of our area will be too expensive for housing redevelopment. Although, as previously mentioned, values

24. Project Statistics, New York Housing Authority, July 1947

25. Ibid.

on the other parts of the Lower East Side continue downward, it is very doubtful whether deterioration here will lower values to the four dollar a square foot level they have achieved along the East River, while commercial uses are prevalent.

In our area the slum conditions, which are among the worst in the city, may very easily go on indefinitely. The factor of low income return from rentals that has ruined property owners to the east of Ridge Street has little effect on the owners of Orchard Street properties whose chief revenue comes from store rentals. Unless the city is prepared to carry a depressed area in the center of a rehabilitated Lower East Side, it will eventually be forced to consider a redevelopment scheme that is consonant with the land values in the area. Such a scheme must include extensive business uses.

Planning reasons

The city has been engaged in a series of major improvements in this area and is planning others. These must eventually have a profound effect upon the area and yet little consideration has been given to any comprehensive plan. This emphasis on "project" planning to the exclusion of area planning has already produced the Allen-Orchard Street half block and threatens to produce other unfortunate results in the area.

On the basis of lower frontage costs the Crosstown Expressway has been planned along Broome Street instead of the more direct route along Delancey Street.²⁶ This will leave a row of small blocks between Delancey Street and the 150 foot wide Broome Street. Since the Expressway's specific purpose is to remove a large proportion of the Crosstown traffic, the addition of a widened Broome Street running parallel to the already widened Schiff Parkway (Delancey Street) is clearly unjustified. It will create splinter blocks, an unnecessarily wide street, and an unnecessary intersection at Essex Street. If the Expressway was turned into Kenmare Street where Broome Street crosses Lafayette Street it could continue straight to the Williamsburg Bridge and use the central parkway strip on Delancey Street which is now used only as a pedestrian island and a source of ventilation for the subways below. It would still be necessary to widen Delancey Street. This could be done by purchasing the blocks between Grand Street and Delancey Street through excess condemnation and redevelopment powers. Broome Street should then be closed between Forsyth Street and Essex Street since it serves mainly as a parking space at the present time and a continuous frontage along Delancey Street should be developed with all the minor streets closed off. With this type of program the city could combine good planning with good economics and possibly

26. See Map XIII: Crosstown Expressway.

27

realize a profit. Although excess condemnation is frowned upon by the courts as a method of recouping expenses, if used to effectuate a public replanning policy in connection with improvements it can be made into a broad and effective instrument. Without such a policy the city may be forced into such compromise arrangements as the Broome Street plan as the only way of making major improvements within its financial limits.

Economic Reasons

In 1932, as justification for the carrying out of certain recommended improvements, the following statement was made:

"The city has already made a huge outlay on the Lower East Side for improvements and for street widenings. It will cost but little more to complete the work so as to stimulate reconstruction and thus fully utilize the city's large investment in schools, streets, improvements, and facilities." 28

This statement does not go far enough. The city has had the experience of making very extensive improvements within this area without creating any appreciable private investment. Allen Street was changed from a narrow street with a noisy El into a parkway without a single improvement resulting in 15 years. If the city is to realize any of the

27. Other cities have been able to profit by excess condemnation. See the National Resources Committee, Urban Planning and Land Policies, 1939, pp. 236-237.

28. Bartholomew, H., Major Traffic Thoroughfares and Transit Plans, 1932, p. 110.

value that it has built into the area it will literally be required to free the land for redevelopment. Its present structures are antiquated. Its lot patterns and ownership makes large-scale unified construction by private developers, virtually impossible. Its lack of a plan continued to spread business uses into areas that will never be fully absorbed^{by}/them and makes their development for residential uses impossible. Its business activities are located in old tenements and the interior streets have become parking lots with the overflow spreading to all parts of the area.

Fortunately, this is one of the few areas in New York that gained no new construction during the 'twenties. Its structural values are in some cases only a small fraction of its land values. The conditions for widespread clearance and reconstruction are almost ideal with scarcely more than a few buildings that are worth preserving. However, if the city does not act to replan the area the present advantages will be lost as businessmen increasingly reconstruct on a piecemeal basis to meet their individual needs.

Conclusion

From a recent publication by the New York City Planning Commission concerning the proposed Manhattan Civic Center the following statement has been chosen to summarize the need for redeveloping this area. The plan is not "a visionary picture of the glorified 'city beautiful' type," but a "practical, realistic plan to provide adequate thoroughfares for the movement of existing and future traffic; to make available desirable sites for necessary public buildings and to clear blight and restore land values on which the city depends for revenue by encouraging private enterprise to participate in the redevelopment of the area." "It is not proposed that this plan as a whole be put into effect immediately. Rather it is a general plan to serve as a guide as various improvements are advanced. However, such an integrated general plan should accelerate rehabilitation and result in the complete transformation of this part of the city."

29. New York Times, June 25, 1948.

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